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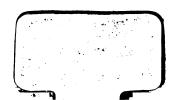
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MATHLEEN

AGNES GIBERNE

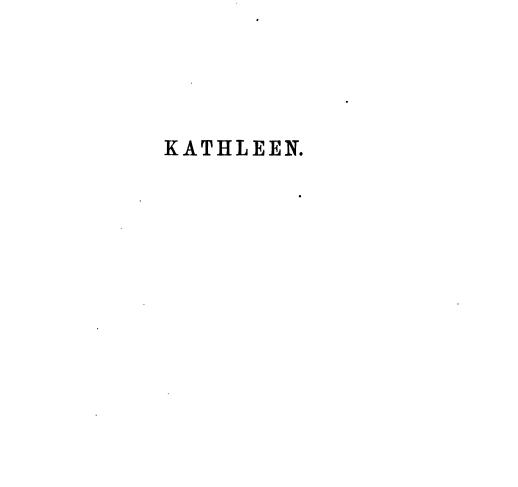


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KATHLEEN:

THE STORY OF A HOME.

BY

AGNES GIBERNE;

AUTHOR OF "SUN, MOON, AND STARS;" "THE UPWARD GAZE;" "SWEETBRIAR;" ETC.

"For Thou wouldst have us linger still Upon the verge of good or ill,
That on Thy guiding Hand unseen
Our undivided hearts may lean."

Christian Year,

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.

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KATHLEEN.

CHAPTER L

SHADOWS IN THE HOME.

"COLD day—don't leave the door open," and with a parting shiver for the outside atmosphere, Dr. Ritchie stepped within a stove-warmed hall. Outer and inner portals were quickly closed, and he stood under the gaslight upon glistening grey and white diamond shapes,—a man of somewhat spare build, encased in greatcoat and woollen comforter. The damp mist and slush of a November afternoon rendered wraps a necessity.

"How is Mrs. Joliffe this afternoon?" he asked.

"She seems but poorly, sir. My mistress has not been herself for a good while past."

The speaker was a superior woman, well dressed, quiet-mannered, and of more than middle age. Her tone had, or seemed to have, a touch of sorrowful meaning in it. Dr. Ritchie looked her steadily in the face, with his kind yet keen blue eyes.

"Eh?" he said.

Hardwicke put her hand to her cheek with a hasty motion. "Nobody sees but me," she said. "I'm sure master doesn't, and Miss Kathleen has no more notion of it than a baby—but I do seem to see a change of late. Not to-day only, sir. My mistress had bad news this morning, but it is not that only. She has been going downhill for a good while past. I am right glad Miss Kathleen is coming home."

"To-morrow—is it not?"

"This afternoon, sir. Master has just gone to meet her at the station."

"Don't say anything to alarm Miss Joliffe when she returns," was the response, in a guarded tone.

Hardwicke shook her head. "But it will come," she said. "But it will come; and you know it, sir."

The Doctor neither confirmed nor denied her assertion. He removed his wraps, one by one, getting through the process with a certain dexterous quickness, entirely free from hurry. These preliminaries ended, Hardwicke would have opened the drawing-room door, but a slight gesture checked her. He opened it himself, and entered.

The room, though not very large, was pretty; just as the house, though not a mansion, was comfortable. The last gleams of light had almost ceased to struggle through the outside atmosphere, and gathering dimness showed behind the plate-glass of the two bow-windows,—so far as draping curtains permitted the glass to be visible. A large fire burnt

brightly, casting over the furniture a glow of red which lent to the prevailing blue a purple tint.

The absorbed occupant of the room remained unconscious of Dr. Ritchie's approach. A delicate woman, slender in figure, seemingly about forty-five in age, with silver hairs glistening in the dark coils which crowned her head, and which were in their turn crowned by a light lace cap,—she had taken her seat on a low chair beside the fire, having an open desk near, and a packet of letters clasped in her hands. The firelight scarcely managed to hide, even temporarily, the whiteness of her thin cheeks and blue-veined temples. Her eyes, full of tears, which dropped slowly one by one, remained fixed upon the glowing coals.

Dr. Ritchie stood for three seconds, saying nothing, just outside the rug. Then he stirred slightly.

"Dr. Ritchie!"—and there was a startled yet graceful movement.

"Don't get up." His hand prevented her when she would have risen. "How are you to-day? Not very well, I am told."

Mrs. Joliffe could not answer him at the moment. Some strong emotion seemed to have possession of her, shown by quivering lips and heaving chest. She tried to speak, but tears came in the place of words.

"Never mind," he said; "you will be better presently."

He left her to recover herself, moving away to the nearest window, where he stood looking into the front garden. High walls and a goodly mass of shrubs rendered the house pleasantly private; but two iron gates permitted a view of the road, and of gas-lamps receding on either side, glimmering faintly and more faintly through the fog. Beyond the road lay iron railings, just visible, enclosing a public garden.

Presently Mrs. Joliffe said again, "Dr. Ritchie,"
—and he came back.

"I beg your pardon, I could not help it," she said apologetically, with a sweet smile, sad still. "I have been fancying that you would look in to-day or to-morrow."

He took a seat beside her, and a few technical questions were put and answered in quiet tones, the Doctor's eyes studying her gravely the while. "You are not so well to-day," he said, responding to his own question.

"I have been upset by a letter this morning."

"Ill news?"

"My brother-in-law is dead. He is one whom I have never known well personally, but his wife was my twin-sister. She died seventeen years ago, and since then he has been in Australia."

"It brings back old days, I dare say, apart from the more direct pain," he said, with fingers once more on her slender wrist, and eyes upon his watch.

"Yes, it is that. Poor Jules Breay was not a man to be much loved or even respected. It was a sad marriage. Still, for her sake——"

"You cannot but feel it," said Dr. Ritchie. "Does he leave any children?"

"One only. I do not know what the arrangement will be about her. She has lived for years in the north of England, with her father's brother, but he has lately married again, and I do not fancy she is very happy. It has been a trouble to me to have seen so little of her. Poor Jules always discouraged intercourse—chiefly, I think, from a feeling of annoyance, because he knew my sister's marriage was not approved in our family. He seems on his deathbed to have expressed a wish that things should be different in the future. I am taking up too much of your time, Dr. Ritchie."

He put aside the apology with a gesture more expressive than words. A man of sensitive nature, and of both strong and cultivated sympathies, he was well used to being the recipient of other people's cares, and looked upon the same as part of his work in life

- "I should like to have Joan here," she said, "to live with us. My husband would be willing. He is always ready for any kindness. But other considerations come in, I know little about Joan."
 - "She might be a nice companion for Kathleen."
- "Yes, she might, if—— I have no doubt Kathleen would like it, but the question does not hinge there. If a time comes soon—when I am not here——"

Her silence met with no answer. The Doctor seemed waiting for her to continue.

"I have been looking forward a great deal of late," she said in tremulous tones. "Ever since your last visit especially, I have wished to speak to you about the future—in connection with Kathleen."

- "Yes?" he said.
- "She knows nothing of the worse symptoms I have had. Ought she to know?" The thought of Joan Breay seemed dropping into the background for the moment.
 - "How much does she know?"
- "Merely what she sees for herself, that I am not strong, and that there is a need to spare me fatigue. Ought I to speak plainly?"
 - "No hurry. Don't shadow her home-coming."
- "No—but soon—do you not think I ought to be open with her soon?"
 - "To what extent?" he asked gravely.

Mrs. Joliffe clasped her hands together, as they lay on her knee, with an unconscious gesture. "It cannot be long," she said; "it cannot be long. You have not hidden the truth from me."

- "You gave me no choice."
- "No, and I am grateful to you for your frankness. I knew it in my heart before I asked you. But my husband has no idea of the state of things. I do not think he realises that I am out of health, and I shrink from telling him. He would either not believe it, or he would be overcome with distress. About Leena I feel differently. She would feel it intensely, I know—still, her chief thought would be for others, and I cannot but think it would be worse for her if it came suddenly, and found her unprepared. I have so much, too, that I wish to say

beforehand. I have to prepare her for the life which lies before her, after I am gone. Everything will rest upon her, and she is only a child."

"Twenty years old," said the Doctor.

"Most girls at twenty are women, but Leena is My children develop slowly, and she is the merest child still, in mind and character, almost as simple-hearted a country child as she was a year ago, when we came out of Somersetshire. I thought a year in Rockston would have changed her more. She has no knowledge of the world, no experience. I have trained her in certain minor details of housekeeping, but she has never stood alone—has never acted for herself. She comes to me in everything, and depends upon me utterly. I doubt if Leena has ever chosen a vard of ribbon without reference to my taste, or read a book without consulting me Sometimes I think that I ought to begin now to teach her to stand alone, that I ought to loosen the bond between us."

"No!" Dr. Ritchie said decisively. "No need for that. When God pleases to make a void for her, He can fill it; but if you break the bond, what will you give her in its place?"

"Ah!" and she sighed.

"I think you are in some measure needlessly distressing yourself," he said, after a pause. "Kathleen may be young for her age, and inexperienced, but she has natural vigour of character, and plenty of common-sense."

"And you would be a friend to her,—that I am

sure of—you and your kind wife," said Mrs. Joliffe wistfully. "But she would have no one to run to, in the thousand and one perplexities of daily life. My husband could not be troubled with them. He will lean upon her then, as he leans upon me now. It is his way. I must do what I can to prepare her."

"Yes, in certain lines. Let her undertake more of the housekeeping, if you like, and leave with her sometimes the responsibility of deciding a knotty point. But I doubt whether it would be an efficient preparation to lay upon her a weight of sad expectation, for weeks and months."

Mrs. Joliffe lifted her eyes, with a look of disappointment. Perhaps it had been unconsciously as much for her own sake as for Kathleen's that she had wished to speak. Perhaps her chief motive, unknowingly, had been a longing for her child's sympathy.

"Do not, at all events, act in haste. Let her keep a light heart as long as she may."

"How long can it be?"

"Impossible to say. Your case is a complicated one, and fresh complications may arise; but on the other hand you may rally considerably. The calmer you can keep yourself—the less you are excited—the more you can avoid all this looking forward and planning for the future——"

"Just what I cannot do," she said. "I seem to live as much in the future as in the present just now—Kathleen's future and my husband's. My

own is all peace; but—how can I be glad to go, when I shall be so needed here?"

A sob came with the words, and once more he made no answer. "You do not tell me how wrong I am—as some people would," she said.

"No need. If you are wrong, you will know it without my telling you,—but I do not know indeed that you are. The feeling is a mother's feeling, unselfish and natural. I think the gladness will come in due time."

"Thank you," was all her answer, and presently he made a movement. "You are very good to give me so much of your time," she said gratefully, turning her face towards him. "I will try to follow your advice. Your horses will be tired of waiting, I am afraid."

"No, I came on foot. One has fallen lame, and I have to spare the other. Is this Kathleen's work?"

He lifted from the table a card illumination, tasteful in design and delicate in execution.

"Yes; she has a knack for that sort of thing."

"A talent I should call it. Good-bye, Mrs. Joliffe."

And the Doctor made his exit. As he passed out of the front door, after again donning his wraps, a station cab drove up, and a bright young face looked out, smiling with pleasure to see him. Dr. Ritchie smiled back, and nodded cordially, but when he went on a shadow came over his eyes. "Poor little Kathleen," he sighed. How long would that bright look continue?

CHAPTER II.

THE HOMELESS COUSIN.

MERRY voices sounded upon the back lawn of Rocklands next morning. Kathleen's return had made this a gala-day, and petitions for a holiday on behalf of the two younger girls met with success—contrary to the scruples of the gentle little governess, Miss Thorpe; but who could resist Kathleen, especially after three weeks' absence?

So they were all out early on the lawn. A sudden change of weather had come about, English fashion, mist and cold having vanished. The day was grey-toned, but mild as April, albeit no spring-likeness showed in the stiffened yellow leaves which strewed the paths and clung yet to the trees. It had been a late autumn.

The two children were down on the grass together, delighting in the antics of two Skye terriers,—somewhat plain-featured little maidens, in blue serge frocks of simple make, the one twelve and the other nine years old. Justinia was thin and angular, while Olave was square and pale, but both had pretty chestnut hair, flowing loose in abundant masses, and both were unmistakable little ladies.

Cleveland, the fourteen-years-old boy, lingering yet, when he should have been on his way to school, held high a scrap of biscuit for the dogs to leap after,—one answering to the offer with persistent jumps, while the other sat with ears tossed scornfully back, as if too proud to try where success was hopeless. A handsome lad, this Cleve, with chestnut hair thickly curling, and saucy dark-blue eyes. He was the darling of his sisters, and the almost idol of his mother—the worse for him, poor boy, since they could scarcely see a fault in him, and sore spoiling was the result.

The elder girl, standing slightly apart, but smiling in full accord with the peals of merriment, was, as Mrs. Joliffe had said of her, singularly undeveloped for her twenty years, having rather the appearance of a girl of sixteen. The difference in dress alone marked her as beyond the schoolroom phase of life, and that was only another shade of blue serge, finer in quality, and slightly more elaborate in make; but it fitted daintily, like a glove, and was finished at throat and wrists with spotless ruffles.

She bore small sisterly resemblance to the younger girls. Strangers sometimes differed as to that wherein the charm of Kathleen's face chiefly lay, but few failed to be conscious of the charm.

A round slender figure, with a touch of childish plumpness about it, and about the little hands; a small head, well shaped, with chestnut-brown hair in a glossy coil at the back; a variable complexion; eyes, not large, but of Mediterranean purple-blue,

no ordinary grey-blue like Olave's; lips that had an infantine look of rosy sweetness and yet were firm; expression pure, natural, intensely earnest; these formed the outline of the picture presented by Kathleen Joliffe, as she stood that day upon the lawn.

The four together made a pretty tableau, and so thought Mrs. Joliffe, as she watched them, unseen, from the library window, with a sorrowful heartache for her darlings' future. How hard it is for a mother, standing where she then stood, to realise that in very truth her children may be as safely guided, as lovingly guarded, as tenderly cared for, when she is gone from them as when she is present!

Quite other thoughts were in Miss Thorpe's mind, as she stood at the top of the back-door steps under a trellis-porch, which in summer showed little of its wood for the mass of covering leaves. She looked distressfully out upon the group, with puckered forehead and lowered mouth-corners, calling now and then, "Justinia! Olave! Justinia, my dear!" in tones which failed to make themselves heard. An anxious little body was Miss Thorpe, ever burdened with expectations of coming troubles, and fears of ill results to each step in life. Her fidgets were a pain and worry to others as well as to herself, and a good deal of forbearance was needed on the part of those who lived with her. She really was a most estimable person, high-principled, conscientious, and well-informed. Mrs. Joliffe reposed trust in her governess, and the children were fond of their teacher; nevertheless she was something of a family trial, even after six years' residence in their midst.

Her present torment was the sight of the children on grass of supposed dampness, together with the discovery that she could not call them off, without herself venturing into the region of chills. Clogs and wraps lay not near at hand. Miss Thorpe was a semi-martyr to neuralgia, and a whole martyr to fear of the same; yet she was not without her tiny spice of heroism. She would not delay for search of wraps, but ventured as she was into the garden, treading gingerly where no signs of damp appeared, and sheltering her two ears with her two hands, till she reached the border of the grass-plat.

"Justinia! Olave! My dears, you will take cold. Do pray come off the wet grass," she called, in tones sharpened by anxiety on her own account.

The two children turned towards her. "But mamma said we might come, Miss Thorpe, and it isn't the least bit damp," exclaimed Justinia.

"Your mamma could not have known. Not damp, Justinia!" and Miss Thorpe stooped to lay a hand on the ground. "Not damp! And Olave sitting down upon it!"

"O no, she only knelt for a moment, and Leena told her to get up. We have our thick shoes on, Miss Thorpe." Justinia's tone was slightly argumentative.

"Look—oh, look, Miss Thorpe, at Skye—isn't he pretty?" cried Olave, as the quieter dog drooped his two long ears, and looked up at the biscuit with

a pensive air of inquiry. "He is the dearest little pet that ever lived!"

Miss Thorpe was in no state of mind to appreciate canine attitudes. "My dears, do pray come off immediately, or we shall have you all laid up," she said, in a complaining manner. "It is quite chilly, and you have no hats or jackets. And, Kathleen, Mrs. Joliffe desired me to say that, as soon as you have watered the plants, she wishes to speak to you."

Miss Thorpe disappeared indoors, carrying with her two reluctant children, and Kathleen went in search of her watering-can, the conservatory and house plants being her especial charge. She seemed in happy spirits, and sang softly to herself, as she sent refreshing showers over the branching maidenhair ferns.

- "Kathleen!" a voice said, and she turned.
- "Yes, papa."
- "I want you to call with me presently on your grandmother. You can do so?"
- "O yes," said Kathleen cheerily, though her intention had been to pass the morning after another fashion. Mr. Joliffe never liked to do anything or go anywhere by himself. A fine-looking man, six feet three in height, and of ample proportionate breadth and stoutness, he certainly gave strangers the impression that he was made to stand alone; but wife and daughter knew well that this was the last thing he ever thought of doing. Whether weakness of decision or craving for sym-

pathy lay under the characteristic, neither troubled herself to inquire—enough that he always did need companionship, and that what he required had to be given.

It was easy to see, at a glance, from which parent Kathleen inherited her dark-blue eyes and engaging manner. Mr. Joliffe was a particularly engaging man, with a soft graciousness of demeanour which sat curiously, yet not unpleasantly, upon his large frame. He had a full brow, and the deep-blue eyes looked tenderly out from beneath, yet by no means with the self-forgetting kindness and watchfulness of Dr. Ritchie's blue eyes. The two men were a contrast. Mr. Joliffe did not always perceive what lay within a yard of his face. Moreover, with all his kindliness of disposition, he was very far from self-forgetting. Nervous people rarely are—and Mr. Joliffe, though so big a man, was none the less a sufferer in certain nervous lines.

- "Your mother will explain to you. She thinks we should have a consultation about Joan."
 - "With grandmamma?" asked Kathleen.
- "Yes, about Joan's future. You and your mother had better talk the matter over."

He moved on, and was in the garden before it occurred to Kathleen to run after him, with the question, "When shall I be ready?"

"Half-past eleven, I think."

She made short work of the plants after that, put away the watering-pot, washed her hands, and sped away quickly to the morning-room—a cosy corner. where she usually spent her time with Mrs. Joliffe before luncheon, working, practising, and reading. Mrs. Joliffe had ever sought to guard against desultory habits in Kathleen, the more because of a slight tendency to the same, inherited from her father.

"Mamma, dear, you want me, Miss Thorpe says. I am quite ready now."

Mrs. Joliffe was writing letters, a weary look upon her face as she did so. Kathleen lovingly drew the pen from her fingers. "It tires you out, and there is no need," she said. "Do sit in the easy-chair, and tell me what you had to say. Something about Joan, is it not? I have been wondering the last few minutes whether I ought to write to poor Joan. Should I, mamma? It is so difficult to write that sort of letter to a perfect stranger."

Mrs. Joliffe remembered Dr. Ritchie's advice. "Think for yourself, darling," she said. "How do you feel about it?"

Kathleen's involuntary response was—"I will do just as you tell me." Mrs. Joliffe made no answer to this, and she considered for half-a-minute, her bright face shading over.

"Yes," she said. "If I were in Joan's place I would like a letter,—if only to show that somebody was thinking of me in my trouble. I am afraid I did not feel enough last night about uncle Jules' death. The home-coming was so pleasant,—and his having died three months ago seems to put it so far back. But of course it is just as sad for poor Joan.

doubly sad to think of his dying in the bush, with no friends near him—none that belonged to him. Are we to wear mourning? I have been wondering if I should."

"If Joan comes here. Otherwise I should hardly think it worth while for you all."

"Is Joan going to pay us a visit? It seems strange that she has never done so yet."

"Her father always discouraged intercourse between her and us. The truth is, very much annoyance was felt in my family at the marriage, and was, I suppose, too openly shown. Jules never forgave it. I would not have held aloof, but he threw difficulties in the way of our meeting, and since your dear aunt's death he and we have dropped entirely apart. He seems to have regretted this when dying, and Joan writes as if she wished a change in the matter. Would you like to see her letter?"

Kathleen took it with a flush of pleasure. "Joan has not seen her father for years, I suppose," she said.

"No; and that must lessen the actual pain of the loss, but not the pain of her lonely position. She has lived with her father's brother nearly all her life, and both from his letter and hers, I gather that he has been kind to her. But he has lately married again, and his wife seems to object to having Joan any longer in the house. Mr. John Breay evidently regrets this. Some little allowance made towards her expenses by her father ceases now, and that may be partly the cause."

- "Then Joan has not much money of her own?"
- "She has none."
- "And no home?"
- "No home—and poor health."

Mrs. Joliffe leant back, and silently scanned her child's face during the perusal of the letter. Kathleen read slowly, now and then turning back to go over a sentence a second time. Once she lifted her eyes, full of a dewy moisture, but nothing was said. Even after reaching the end, she sat awhile, lost in thought.

"It is sad," Mrs. Joliffe remarked.

"Oh, very, very sad," said Kathleen. "Poor Joan! and she is so young too—not twenty yet. But she does not write as if she were young. It is more like an old tired-out person, who has come to the end of everything in life. Don't you think there is a sort of something just a little bitter—almost hard—in the way she writes—as if she had given up looking for kindness, or expecting to be happy? I wonder if I should feel like that in her place?"

"I think not."

"I might," said Kathleen dreamily. "I have always had so much love and kindness from everybody. Not only in the old home, where I lived all my life, but here too—though we have only been a year in Rockston—how good people are to me! I wonder at it sometimes. But if all that were to stop, I wonder if I should write as Joan does?"

Mrs. Joliffe secretly thought there was little fear of Kathleen ever finding herself without friends. "Difference in temperament makes a difference in people's feelings," she said. "And, my darling, I think—I do think—that when great trouble comes to you, the great comfort will be yours of a loving Master close at hand to bear you up." Mrs. Joliffe spoke with too much of tremulous earnestness, and a touch of fear crossed Kathleen's face.

"Mamma, you talk as if—you do not think any great trouble is coming?"

Mrs. Joliffe felt that she had gone too far, and forced a smile. "Why should I, darling? Trouble may come at any time to any one. I cannot expect you always to escape it. My comfort is that you would not stand alone."

"O no — because I have you," said Kathleen involuntarily.

Mrs. Joliffe controlled a shiver. "Would that be all, Leena?"

"No," Kathleen answered soberly. "I know what you meant." In a lowered and reverent voice she added, "I should have Jesus. Poor Joan doesn't say anything of that sort—I wonder if she feels it. Perhaps she is shy in writing to you, but she does speak as if she had no comfort at all. Mamma, I always think that if God seems so near in happy times, He would seem much nearer in sorrowful times."

"It ought to be so. I am sure it is His will to be near, and if He is not, it must be our own fault, our own turning away from Him," said Mrs. Joliffe, smitten with a conscience-stroke. For was it thus indeed with her?—and if not, why? "I am afraid that sometimes when God would have us come closer to Him, we do not see or believe it."

"Do you think not?" Kathleen asked wistfully.

"But of course I do not know—I have had no great troubles yet. It is so easy to cling to Him when everything looks bright."

"Some would not agree with you. I have heard many say that they could *only* cling in times of trouble, and so that God had, as it seemed, to keep them in trouble always, lest they should wander."

"Yes, I have seen that thought in one or two memoirs," said Kathleen. "I don't think I quite understand it, mamma. For it isn't we that have to keep ourselves, but God that keeps us near to Him, and it seems to me that it must be just as easy to Him to draw us and to keep us at any time, whether bright or dull or unhappy. If we just feel sure, and just trust in the Lord Jesus—"

"That is the 'if.' I think the whole difficulty hinges there," said Mrs. Joliffe. "If we could believe and trust Him, and feel quite sure——"

The wistful look came back into Kathleen's eyes. "I don't think I quite see the difficulty," she said slowly. "I suppose—perhaps—it is because I have had so little trouble. It always seems as if I could not help trusting Him. Why, mamma, I could not doubt you for a single moment—and He loves me even more than you do."

"Yes—if one could realise," said Mrs. Joliffe again; and then she added, "But I think you realise

it all more simply than I do, darling; and if you can, it is something to be thankful for."

"I have wondered sometimes if doubts would come to me by and by," said Kathleen softly. "People talk so much about doubts, and I don't think I ever had any. Of course I do wrong often enough, and forget, and wander, and grow careless, and like my own way, but I can't doubt Christ, or His power and love. Do you think I shall begin by and by?"

"Remember your own words, Leena; cannot God keep you from doubting?"

"O yes," and she smiled contentedly.

Then after a break, Mrs. Joliffe asked, with some abruptness, "Should you count it a trouble if Joan came to live with us?"

"To live with us—altogether? Not only to stay for a visit?"

"To make this her home. Should you like it, or would it be a great trouble?"

"I don't know. I have not thought of such a thing. Mamma, I don't think—perhaps—that it would be a great trouble."

"Only a little one. Not, at all events, a pleasure?"

Another pause, and Mrs. Joliffe waited. Kathleen looked out of the window, with eyes slowly

filling.

"It is not decided yet," said Mrs. Joliffe. "Your father is willing, but I have thought it best that my mother should be consulted; and I wish you to have a voice in the matter."

- "Would you like it, mamma?"
- "For Joan's sake, yes,—poor girl. I do not know Joan personally, but her mother was very very dear to me."
 - "And Joan has no home," said Kathleen.
 - " No."
- "And she does not seem fit to go out as governess or companion."
 - "I am afraid not."
- "And even if she were, you would not like that for a child of aunt Joanna's."
- "It would be painful to me. But I must think first of my children's happiness."
- "Oh, but, mamma, it could not make me unhappy to have Joan here," said Kathleen eagerly. "It would not, indeed. I don't want to be selfish. I hardly know what made me so stupid just now,—only you and I seem so perfectly happy, that I did not like to think of a third person always sitting with us. But I should like to make Joan happy."
- "Well, we shall see," responded Mrs. Joliffe, pressing Kathleen's hand. "The call to grandmamma must come first."
- "I suppose grandmamma would not like Joan to live with her?"
- "I hardly expect that. But now, my Leena, you must dress. Look at the clock.

CHAPTER III.

OLD MRS. MONTGOMERIE.

"LOVELY day for November, Mrs. Montgomerie—quite contrary to one's usual notions of what the month ought to be. Really it is more like September."

The words were uttered in a systematically lively manner, by a person of middle age, stout and highvoiced, with prominent eyes, and an air of goodhumoured self-satisfaction over her mottled reddish The speaker was seated at an old-fashioned centre-table, bestowing attention upon a piece of canvas stretched upon a large frame. Two yards distant an old lady occupied an arm-chair,-rather a frail little old lady, in black dress and fawncoloured shawl. She had aquiline features, and the remains of a peach-bloom complexion, though past seventy-five years of age. A certain nervous twitch was apparent from time to time about her lips, with their dropping corners, and her general expression was unhappy, the curve of the grey eyebrows showing an unrestful spirit. A volume of sermons lay open on her knee, and she was reading the somewhat close print without spectacles, -so far as reading was permitted by her talkative companion.

The small drawing-room in which they sat was crammed to overflowing with furniture, which for the most part dated three-quarters of a century back. All was more or less valuable in the eyes of the old lady, and some articles were of no small intrinsic worth. Inlaid cabinets and carved chairs vied with each other in quaint beauty, and oil-paintings in massive frames crowded the walls, while the window was draped with lace curtains of antique design.

"Wonderfully warm. I could hardly believe my own senses this morning," continued Miss Jackson. "But one never is prepared for these startling changes—not even after forty years' experience. What colour do you advise next to the green, Mrs. Montgomerie?"

The old lady glanced at the canvas with an air of indifference. "I really do not know," she said.

"I should say purple would be the best shade, a good contrast to the green, and yet not too startling. I wish I had not put yellow in this other part. But the purple will look sweetly; just see the effect. What is your opinion?"

"It matters very little," said Mrs. Montgomerie, going back to her sermon.

"Well, perhaps so," admitted Miss Jackson. "An ottoman cover is not an affair of very great importance. Still, when one does a thing one likes to do it well; and Mrs. Joliffe's taste is particular. I should like to hit it, if possible."

"Is that for Katie?" A faint shade of interest crept into the old lady's face. "I had forgotten,"

Miss Jackson showed no surprise. "Yes, for Mrs. Joliffe. I began it by your wish, Mrs. Montgomerie. Don't you recollect—it is for the little ottoman which holds Miss Joliffe's fancy-work? How will Mrs. Joliffe like my arrangement of colours?"

"She will like it," said Mrs. Montgomerie. "Yes, the colours are pretty. How soon shall you have finished?"

"Not for another fortnight, I am afraid. There is a good piece yet to be done. Don't you think you could put in a little bit of work yourself, Mrs. Montgomerie, if I outlined the pattern? Just a mere corner! Mrs. Joliffe would be so pleased."

Mrs Mongomeric shook her head. She had an aversion to work, rare in old ladies, and did it only by proxy.

"I think you might get out to-day," said Miss Jackson, as the eyes returned once more to the sermon page,—clear dark-blue eyes like Kathleen's, well kept through seventy-five years. Mrs. Montgomerie had altogether a carefully-preserved aspect, as if she had spent a good part of her life under a glass case. She had ever been tenderly shielded.

"It is an east wind. I am afraid of bronchitis."

"Not east, I assure you. The vane points directly south."

"I always know the feeling of east in the wind. Weathercocks are sometimes mistaken," said Mrs. Montgomerie, with a spice of gentle obstinacy.

"It is extremely mild. The air would do you good."

"Not if there is any east in it. And the supper you made me take last night has quite disagreed with me. I shall be better indoors to-day. When is Dr. Ritchie coming again? He ought to have been yesterday."

"You told him he need not come again for ten days."

"You are mistaken, Miss Jackson. I always expect Dr. Ritchie on Wednesday, and to-day is Thursday."

"Would you like me to send---?"

"No, certainly not. I never like to be a trouble to anybody. Dr. Ritchie probably does not think it worth his while to come."

Miss Jackson earnestly hoped that the Doctor might make allowance for the old lady's defective memory, and appear before the expiration of the ten days.

"People grow tired of coming. It is only natural," said Mrs. Montgomerie. "It is what I must expect. An old woman like me can offer no attractions."

"My dear Mrs. Montgomerie!"

"Katie hardly ever comes, and as for Kathleen-"

"Miss Joliffe has been away for three weeks," said Miss Jackson. "You will see her again now, I don't doubt. Poor Mrs. Joliffe really does not look as if she had any strength to spare from home duties."

"And Dr. Baring has quite dropped his visits."

"Well, really, Mrs. Montgomerie, one can hardly

wonder; he is perfectly overwhelmed with work. I met him the other day, and he said he had been planning to call for weeks past, but he was so distracted with calls upon his time that he did not know where to turn first."

"He should keep a curate," said Mrs. Montgomerie.

"Only unfortunately curates have to be paid," said Miss Jackson. "With a stipend of three hundred and fifty pounds, and five children to provide for, and very little private property, Dr. Baring can't have much money to spare. However, I am told that a cousin or friend has just come to stay with him—a clergyman—and that may give him more leisure. Perhaps we shall hear the stranger preach next Sunday. I do not know the clergyman's name."

"I hope we shall not. I dislike changes," said Mrs. Montgomerie.

"Unless it is change for the better. They say the young man may perhaps remain for some time in Rockston. Someone is in the garden—hark! Ah, it is Mr. and Miss Joliffe."

"They will come in; bring them to me, Miss Jackson. You can put this book away, if you please, and hand me my scent-bottle. The corner of that cloth does not lie quite straight. If Mr. Joliffe feels any draught from the door, don't leave it open while he is here. You are always so fond of draughts, but other people do not like them."

Mrs. Montgomerie's depressed look really did brighten for the moment, as her son-in-law and her favourite grandchild entered. "Pretty well to-day, mother?" asked Mr. Joliffe stooping to kiss her affectionately. "Katie was anxious that we should see you this morning. Leena only came back last night. She looks well, does she not? How is Katie?—Oh, much the same as usual. She generally contrives to do just a little too much for her strength. I am fairly well, thank you,—not quite the thing. How do you do, Miss Jackson? Pleasanter weather to-day than yesterday."

Miss Jackson could see that the call was made with a purpose, and that the said purpose was kept in the background while she remained present. She stayed two or three minutes, talking and laughing in her hearty style, and then with a slight excuse withdrew, shutting the door behind her.

"That's a wonderful woman; always in high spirits," said Mr. Joliffe.

"She is overpowering—quite overpowering," said Mrs. Montgomerie. "I am never allowed to do anything in peace. Miss Jackson has no idea of employing herself without talking."

"She is very fond of you, grandmamma," said Kathleen.

"Yes, my dear—yes, I dare say. And she is a good creature, a very good creature, in her own way. But I have been used all my life to more of repose and refinement. It is a great trial to have a person like this about me. I cannot grow used to her ways."

"Not even after four years?" said Mr. Joliffe musingly.

"No, not after four years,—and I should not after

forty years. It is impossible. She is an excellent creature, but she wears me out, Albert. I am never allowed to read in peace, or to please myself. I do not wish to hurt her feelings, and I bear with her as patiently as I can, but it is a very great trial."

"You would not like to make a change, mother? Here is Joan Breay, wanting a home, and talking of being somebody's companion. What do you say to sending away Miss Jackson, and letting Joan take her place?"

The proposal was made in jest, for he knew that Joan was unfit for the post, but Mrs. Montgomerie looked extremely alarmed.

"O no, I could not think of it. Pray do not let such an idea reach Miss Jackson. I could not possibly do without her, Albert. I have such a horror of strangers,—and she understands all my ways; I could not *think* of parting with her."

"But, grandmamma, Joan is not really a stranger. She is your own grandchild," said Kathleen.

Mrs. Montgomerie seemed rather in a mist about Joan. News had been sent her the day before of Jules Breay's death, but it had not touched her closely, and Joan's forlorn position had scarcely reached her understanding. Mr. Joliffe explained, and she grasped slowly the leading facts.

"I see,—yes, of course. It was very wrong of Jules to leave her nothing. He ought to have laid by—but he always was a strange man. Poor dear Joanna—the marriage was a sad mistake. But it is just like you and Katie to think of having Joan to

live with you. It is only what I should have expected. This Mr.—her uncle—whatever his name is -ought to keep her still, but if he will not I don't really see what else is to be done. I should not like a grandchild of mine to become a companion. And in a large family like yours, one more or less makes little difference. It would be a serious matter for me to take her in-with my nerves in their present state. Besides, you say Joan is an invalid, and invalids always try me with their fidgetty ways, Miss Jackson is wonderfully strong, and that suits Pray do not put any idea of change into her head, my dear Leena. I am getting old, and I cannot bear change. I would not part with Miss Jackson under any consideration. She manages everything for me, and she is a good creature, most attentive and careful—if only she were not quite so frivolous."

The old lady seemed so agitated by her son-inlaw's suggestion, that he had to give some minutes to soothing her, with assurances that he had meant nothing, and that no steps should be taken contrary to her wishes. Miss Jackson presently reappeared, with a silver biscuit-box. Mr. Joliffe had a particular liking for cracknels, and, in her pleasure at watching him eat them, Mrs. Montgomerie grew more composed. Miss Jackson carried off Kathleen into the verandah, under pretext of looking at a plant, and there asked, "What do you think of your grandmamma to-day?"

"She seems nervous," Kathleen said. "Not more so than usual, perhaps."

"It is not one of her best days. I wish I could cure her of sermon-reading. Don't be shocked, Miss Joliffe."

"No, I understand. Mamma has said almost the same."

"I don't mean that I wish to cure it altogether. But she does literally nothing from morning till night except read sermons,—or she would do nothing, if I let her. I believe it is a matter of conscience,—partly. She thinks me fearfully depraved, because I go in for fiction in preference. But I must have some recreation."

"Yes; I don't think sermons all day long are good," said Kathleen. "One gets tired of one line of thought, with no change."

"I couldn't!" said Miss Jackson, with a gesture. "People are differently constituted, to be sure,—but I know I couldn't stand that, and I don't believe Mrs. Montgomerie can either. I do all I can to vary her occupation,-interrupt her, and make talk, and give her news. She thinks me cruel, I know, but I must try to keep up her spirits. I wish she would take to work—I don't care what kind. Even something livelier in the way of sermons would be a change. Unless they have been written over fifty years ago, she doesn't think them worth a look. I don't believe she takes in half the sense of what she reads; I shouldn't in her place. They're as ponderous as lead,—paragraphs a page long, without a single full stop. But I mustn't keep you, Miss Joliffe. Your father is calling."

And in a few minutes the two were walking homewards.

- "Papa," said Kathleen, "there is no hope of Joan living with grandmamma."
- "I never imagined such a thing seriously for a moment, my dear. She is wedded to Miss Jackson."

"Only she complains of her."

- "It is your grandmother's way—she would do the same of anybody. A change would be misery to her."
 - "And about Joan, papa?"
- "You and your mother must decide. I cannot settle for you. It seems sad that the poor girl should be cast adrift."
- "I see that. She had such a love for aunt Joanna. I think it would be great pain to her to see Joan obliged to earn her livelihood. It isn't as if we were poor and could not take her in. And grandmamma feels the same. And there is the small spare-room, which seems just made for her. We shall still have our best spare-room."

The cheerful tone deceived Mr. Joliffe. "Your mother must have misunderstood you," he said. "She fancied you did not wish Joan to come. I told her I was surprised, for I thought the companionship would be nice for you. But, as she says, we do not know what sort of girl Joan may be. She thinks it might be best to ask her first for a long visit, and to make final arrangements later. Would you like it?"

- "Mamma knows best," said Kathleen.
- "Yes, yes; but I mean, would you like Joan to live here permanently?"
- "I think it would be right," said Kathleen. "Don't you think so, papa? It isn't so much a question of wishing, as of what is right. If I were in Joan's place, I should not like to be left out in the cold."
- "True—true. Quite your mother's way of looking at things," said Mr. Joliffe, and a glow of pleasure came to Kathleen's cheeks.

So the letter was written, and the invitation was quickly accepted.

CHAPTER IV.

CLEVE'S DOINGS.

"KATHLEEN, my dear, if I could have just a few words with you—only for a minute! I know it is rather late, but the matter is one of importance. I would not otherwise take up your time. Two minutes only."

Kathleen was beginning to have rather a dread of Miss Thorpe's important private communications. Until lately Mrs. Joliffe had always been their direct recipient, but in consideration of Mrs. Joliffe's increasing delicacy, Miss Thorpe was beginning to use Kathleen as her medium of communication. Hitherto the medium had been a transparent one. Every word uttered to Kathleen had gone straight to her mother.

"I must not be long, please, Miss Thorpe," she said, following the little governess into the school-room. Miss Thorpe carefully shut the door. "Joan may arrive in a few minutes, and I ought to change my dress first, for I may not have much time after, before dinner. You know papa has forgotten all about Joan's coming, and has asked Dr. and Miss Baring to dinner, and Mr. Corrie too."

"Yes, my dear, yes, I see," said Miss Thorpe, becoming flustered. She was easily affected by another's state of mind. Kathleen, though ordinarily of pretty and reposeful manners, was apt under pressure to fall into a state of what she herself called "hurry," and there was a little of this discernible at the present moment in her pretty bright flush and quick speech. Miss Thorpe immediately caught the infection, outdid Kathleen, and was in a condition of tremor, not necessary under the circumstances.

"Yes, my dear—yes, I see—then perhaps this is the wrong time for me to speak. I am sadly apt to choose the wrong time, but it is difficult to know which is the right time. Your dear mamma was always ready to give me her attention—always but now she is looking so sadly, I really cannot bear to distress her."

"Mamma is not ill, Miss Thorpe?" Kathleen spoke in a frightened tone, half of assertion, half of questioning.

"I do not say that she is, Kathleen, but she is looking sadly to-day. I do not feel that it is the right time to add to her cares. I know she would listen to me immediately, if I considered it my duty to go to her."

Poor Kathleen looked quite unhappy. "Indeed I don't mean to be unkind," she said. "It is just because mamma seems so tired to-day that I do not like to be late, and to leave her to see after things. At least, that is part of my reason."

"Yes,—oh, I perfectly understand," said Miss Thorpe, in her blandest voice, a fading tone, like the last sigh of a summer breeze. "I am not blaming you, dear Kathleen. One must expect sometimes to be thought intrusive and ill-judging—especially in my position—and you do not quite understand me, as your dearest mamma does. But I know you mean to do all for the best. Do not let me keep you any longer."

Kathleen felt guilty, and could not resolve to hasten away. "I can wait five minutes," she said. "I will be quick then, and get ready in time. What is it that you wanted to say?"

"I had better not tell you now. It cannot be helped. Other things are of more immediate importance, or they may seem so to you. Mrs. Joliffe would understand in a moment, but in her state of health, it is not right that she should be flurried,—perhaps unnecessarily,—and young girls do not realise the relative importance of things. I must wait and choose a better time. It is only my solicitude about that dear boy,—but after all nothing can be done tonight. No doubt I have acted unwisely in speaking at this particular moment."

"If it is anything about Cleve, I would rather hear it at once," said Kathleen, trying not to show impatience.

"To-morrow will do, Kathleen. You had better not give any more thought to the subject this evening. Dear Olave has a sore throat, and I am uneasy about her, though it may pass off. She was out too late yesterday evening with Mr. Joliffe. These things cannot always be prevented."

"But about Cleve?" said Kathleen.

"Yes, poor dear boy! He is so amiable and lovable that one can hardly find it in one's heart to believe any harm of him. But indeed I have long been sadly afraid that Cleve is not perfectly straightforward. I have watched him carefully, and I am convinced of it. I have forborne to speak, knowing how much dear Mrs. Joliffe would be distressed; but, indeed, Kathleen, I can no longer shut my eyes to the truth, neither ought you."

Kathleen had difficulty in restraining indignation. She did not restrain it so far that it was not plainly visible in her sparkling eyes and heightened colour. Some of Kathleen's friends were wont to say that she looked her prettiest under aroused indignation. Miss Thorpe saw the signs, but did not care for the prettiness. She was not quite so fond of Kathleen as were most people. The two natures did not entirely suit one another. At that moment Miss Thorpe was labouring under a disadvantage common to habitual alarmists. A custom of perpetually crying "Wolf!" when no wolf was at hand, rendered her warning of the real wolf likely to be counted of little value.

"You are angry with me, and it is natural. The dear boy entwines himself round our hearts. I could unhappily bring forward several proofs of what I say, if there were time. It is enough, however, that this afternoon I saw him walking with the Hopkinsons, apparently on intimate terms,"

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"John and Fred Hopkinson! O no, surely!"
Kathleen quite laughed. "Cleve would not dream
of such a thing."

"He was with them. I wish I could have doubted my own eyes. We went down the little lane to the back of Purcell's farm. I do not care for the walk, it is so lonely,—but the children have often begged to go, and for once I yielded."

"But, Miss Thorpe, indeed you must be mistaken. Not only because Cleve knows that any intercourse with them would be a thing forbidden, but Cleve himself is a gentleman in his tastes. He would not dream of associating with those low-mannered coarse boys—I know he would not."

Miss Thorpe moved her head slowly in negative "It was not I alone who saw him," she said. "Olave had run on, but Justinia was with He did not see us,—I almost wish he had me. done so. We were in the lane, and he was in the field, behind the hedge,-talking loudly, and laughing in a kind of daring way. I heard him saying words that would grieve you. It was not Cleve's usual tone, though I could not mistake the voice. He seemed to be imitating the other boys' way of speaking. Justinia did not hear any words, I am glad to say, but there was a gap in the hedge, and we both saw him plainly. I did not know at the moment whether I should be wise to speak to him or no, and while I was hesitating they went off, and scrambled over a ditch into another field, out of my reach. I told Justinia that I would inform you of what had occurred, and that she had better not mention the matter to Olave or any one."

Kathleen was pale with dismay. "But it cannot be true," she said. "It cannot be true. Cleve with those boys! Why, they are friends with the riff-raff of the place. No gentleman's sons here would associate with them. It must be a mistake."

"I am afraid no mistake is possible. Question Justinia, if you think it advisable. Your mother would not doubt my word, but you can appeal to Justinia, if you like—though I should have preferred to keep her out of the affair. I am not vexed, Kathleen. I know how fond you are of Cleve. But your fondness should not make you shut your eyes to the truth. If he takes up with such companions, he will be ruined. Have you not seen a change in him of late? He does not look one in the face as he used to do."

"No—I don't know—I have not seen," said Kathleen. "He is always the same to us. It must be true if you saw him; but somehow I can't believe it. I mean I can't believe he is in the habit of walking with those boys."

"Cleve was carrying a gun," said Miss Thorpe.

"Yes. They had two guns between them, and Cleve had one of the two. I am afraid he will get himself into terrible trouble."

"I don't think I must tell mamma before dinner—it would quite upset her," said Kathleen, after

[&]quot;Cleve was?"

a bewildered pause. "Poor mamma! she always trusts him so entirely."

"You must not tell her at all to-night, my dear. I should advise you to consult with your father first, and perhaps even to speak to Cleve."

"O no, I could not hide anything from mamma," said Kathleen. "And if I told papa first, he would consult her directly what to do. But perhaps I had better wait till the morning, though I don't quite know whether I ought."

A sound of carriage-wheels, and a tap at the schoolroom door, came simultaneously.

"Joan," said Kathleen,

"And you have not changed your dress. I am wrong to have delayed you so long."

"I will manage," said Kathleen, opening the door. Hardwicke stood outside, wearing a grave face. "If you please, Miss Joliffe," she began, in a low voice.

"Miss Breay has come, I think," said Kathleen.

"Yes. If you please, Miss Kathleen, one moment—I think Dr. Ritchie is in the fly with her. I saw his face at the window. Would you please ask him to stop and see my mistress?"

"Mamma?" said Kathleen. "He saw her yesterday."

"Your mamma is not very well, Miss Leena." Hardwicke often relapsed into the title of childish days. "She was taken faint while dressing for dinner, and it hasn't gone off yet."

Dr. Ritchie was just entering the door, with a somewhat shabbily-dressed girl beside him—thin

in figure, with brown eyes and prominent teeth, and a sallow pale complexion. "Your cousin and I have travelled from London together," he said, "and I thought I would see her safely housed." Then noticing Kathleen's look he stopped. "What is wrong? Mother not well?"

"No, she is faint," said Kathleen, steadying her voice with difficulty. "Hardwicke says she has been faint. I did not know it till this moment."

Kathleen was positively forgetting to welcome Joan, till a touch of her hand, and a meaning glance from Dr. Ritchie, recalled her to a sense of her duty. She crossed the space between, kissed Joan affectionately, said in rather a hurried manner, "I am so glad you are come," and then turned back with the same distressed face.

"Is it anything of consequence, Dr. Ritchie? Mamma is not given to faintness like some people."

"It is trying weather to-day," said the Doctor, not so pityingly as his feelings would have dictated, for he had no wish to alarm her. "I am not surprised that your mother should suffer from the closeness."

Kathleen looked relieved, and asked, "Shall I come with you?"

"Hardwicke and I can manage. I will see you before I go, and tell you how Mrs. Joliffe is, but I think your cousin wants a little attention now. She has had a long journey."

"I am sorry—I did not think," said Kathleen, turning to Joan.

"You needn't stay with me," said Joan bluntly, as the Doctor disappeared with Hardwicke. She had a sense of being *de trop*, always uncomfortable to a proud and shy nature.

"I should like to show you your room," said Kathleen kindly, slipping her arm into Joan's. "I am so sorry you should find us in this confusion. It does not happen often. But when mamma is poorly it seems to upset everything. I wish you could see her, for she has been so looking forward to having you here. This way, please, Joan. It is unfortunate that we have friends coming to dinner this evening,—our rector, Dr. Baring, and his sister, and a friend of his, Mr. Corrie. I am glad to see Mr. Corrie, because he is such a friend of my favourite cousin, Kenison Montgomerie; but I wish it had been any other evening. He and Kenison have been curates in the same parish for two years. Here we are."

Kathleen was somewhat disappointed that the pretty room, with its small bouquet of hot-house flowers, elicited no signs of pleasure. Joan sat down moodily in the easy-chair, and was silent.

"I am sorry none of us could meet you at the station," said Kathleen. "I hope Anne managed nicely."

"Dr. Ritchie managed," said Joan.

"It is just like him. He is always so kind. I am afraid you are overdone, Joan, but dinner will be ready in a quarter of an hour, and that will do you good. I must change my dress now."

"Am I to change mine?" asked Joan reluctantly.
"Don't you think you will find it refreshing?"
asked Kathleen, knowing her father to be fastidious

on that point. Even had no friends been expected,

she would have felt it necessary for Joan.

"I don't know. It is so much trouble," said Joan.

"And I have not anything nice—in black, at least. I have good coloured dresses. But since uncle John married again, every penny has been grudged me. I only have an old cast-off black silk of hers, besides this one, and I hate wearing it."

Kathleen did not like either words or tone. "I think it would be best to change," she said gently, and she hurried away.

CHAPTER V.

DINNER.

"Your mother cannot come downstairs to-day, Kathleen," said Dr. Ritchie, meeting her in the passage.

Kathleen felt and looked dismayed. Dinner without Mrs. Joliffe at the head of the table was an unheard-of event. Whether equal or not to the exertion, Mrs. Joliffe had always occupied her place there. The evening was generally her best time, and however weak and poorly she might be in the morning, she usually brightened up later in the day. Moreover, she had not for years past ever left home for a single night, without her husband. Kathleen could recall absolutely no precedent for the present occasion. It had not even occurred to her, as a thing possible, that her mother might not recover sufficiently to walk downstairs, and take her usual post. She found herself saying involuntarily, "But papa will not like——"

- "She must not come down."
- "Is mamma ill?" asked Kathleen, trembling.
- "She has been very faint, and exertion would bring a return of the faintness. I think the attack

has been coming on for some time. You will see her better in a day or two, but you must keep her quiet, and not allow her to be worried."

"Mamma does worry herself sometimes," said Kathleen slowly.

"Yes, she does. Don't let her have anything to worry herself about."

Kathleen thought of Miss Thorpe, and an anxious weight gathered on her brow, together with a look of resolution. "No," she said, "I will not."

Dr. Ritchie's hand touched her arm kindly. "You don't worry yourself, do you, Kathleen?"

She looked up, smiling, to meet his eyes, and then tears filled her own. "No," she said, "I don't think I do, when I can tell everything to mamma. It is so different if I must not."

"You must not this evening," said the Doctor.
"What you have to do is to be brave, and to think of her, not of yourself."

"Is that thinking of myself? I did not know it," said Kathleen, going beyond his meaning with quickness. "Have I been selfish?"

"I did not intend to make so severe an accusation," said the Doctor, a good deal moved by the humble self-questioning of her face. "A wish to get rid of one's own burden by laying it on another may be selfishness—disguised under a prettier title."

"What title?"

"Craving for sympathy." Dr. Ritchie had Mr. Joliffe in his mind, while Kathleen was thinking

only of herself. "It is a natural feeling, but like everything else it may go too far."

"I will try to be different," she said sorrowfully. "I did not see it before. Thank you very much for telling me. Yes, I think mamma has been everything to everybody in the house, and everything has always seemed sure to go right, directly she knew about it."

"Yes, but she had the wear and tear of making things go right."

"I see. I did not see before," repeated Kathleen.

"No, and I am not surprised. It was quite natural, and your mother liked it. But now that you are older, and she is not strong, I think you might spare her some needless cares. Any little matters in which you can decide alone, and act independently—it is well that you should do so. I have no doubt you will have her better in a day or two; only keep her quiet. She would like to see you for a moment before dinner. Don't come with me. You have no time to lose, and I will have a word with Mr. Joliffe downstairs."

Kathleen hastened to the bedroom, where Mrs. Joliffe lay on the bed. The shut eyes opened at the sound of footsteps. "I am so sorry, my darling," she said, as Kathleen bent over her. "Dr. Ritchie will not hear of my going downstairs."

"O no,-you could not," said Kathleen.

"I don't think I could sit up. It is an unfortunate day—with Joan just come, and friends asked.

But I am sure you will manage nicely. Try to make everything go smoothly for your father."

"Yes, I will do my very best,—only please don't think about it," pleaded Kathleen, her heart beating quickly, alike at the thought of dinner, and at the sight of her mother's exceeding languor and whiteness. "Do have a good night, and be better to-morrow."

"I wish for your sake I could be down, it will make your father so nervous. But Dr. Ritchie says it is good for my Kathleen to have to act for herself."

"It is time I should leave off being a baby," said Kathleen, trying to speak playfully.

"Dr. Baring will take you in, darling, and papa will take Miss Baring in. You must introduce Mr. Corrie to Joan. Don't leave that to your father. He is sure to forget."

"I will see to it all," said Kathleen. She stooped for another kiss, and then hastened to her cousin's room. Joan was ready, and the two went down together.

The three guests had already arrived, and were in conversation with Mr. Joliffe, who were a disconcerted expression, familiar to his daughter.

"Kathleen, you are late," he said, as she entered. "I have been telling Miss Baring that Dr. Ritchie unfortunately forbids your mother to come down. But you should have been in time."

Kathleen's apology was prettily made, though the rebuke evidently distressed her. The move into the dining-room was made in due order, and Kathleen took her mother's place for the first time, little dreaming, poor child, how soon it was to become her own. She was somewhat flushed and anxious at the beginning, but before her mind's eye lay a picture of how her mother would have moved and acted, and no better model could have been hers. The mixture of childlike shyness and of gentle self-possession made an impression on her guests; and Mr. Joliffe's unhappy certainty that all must go wrong in his wife's absence gradually settled into a consciousness that all was going right. His face relaxed, and he became able to pay due attention to Miss Baring.

Joan's bashful silence under the restraints of a ceremonious dinner was not to be overcome, and the task of entertaining the two gentlemen devolved upon Kathleen. She acquitted herself well, putting other matters aside and giving full attention to the present duty. A touch of patient repression in her usually bright face did not lessen the charm of her manner.

Miss Baring, the rector's sister, and his housekeeper since his wife's death, was a stout person of middle age and of downright manners, with a prim row of curls on either side of her face, and with a style of dress exactly one stage in rear of prevailing fashions. She had not attractiveness of manner, and she was wont to say blunt things, giving sometimes pain, and sometimes offence thereby. Perhaps she was in reality less unsympathising than people commonly supposed her to be.

Dr. Baring resembled his sister in being not tall

and somewhat stout, but he had a fine ruddy face, with framework of crisp grey hair and whiskers, and his genial bearing was the reverse of hers. Everybody liked Dr. Baring, and the only offence he ever gave was through the unhappy impossibility that he should bestow exactly so much time and attention upon each individual in his parish as that individual might think fit.

The stranger, Marshall Corrie, interested Kathleen from his connection with her cousin, Kenison Montgomerie—a very favourite cousin, some five or six years her senior, and for two years past a London curate in the same parish as Mr. Corrie. The death of their rector had lately taken place, and the new rector, a younger man than his predecessor, required only one curate. He was willing to keep either of the two young men, though rather preferring the senior curate; but Mr. Corrie decided the matter in favour of his junior co-worker by declining to remain. He knew how deeply Kenison would have regretted a change.

"Though I am not sure that a change would not be good for Montgomerie," he remarked, when talking to Kathleen in the drawing-room, Dr. Baring being engaged with his sister and Mr. Joliffe, while Joan sat listlessly apart, declining to join in the conversasion. Kathleen had not till now found an opportunity to speak about Kenison. She liked Mr. Corrie's face. Its outlines showed thought and vigour of character; moreover, he was a thorough gentleman, with a certain unmistakable University stamp about his self-possessed bearing,—and Kathleen had a marked esteem for the quality of self-possession. Possibly a grain of self-confidence mingled with it, but this she did not detect. Time and life-discipline would probably cure that defect.

"Kenison wrote me word that it would have been a great trouble to him to leave his poor people," said Kathleen.

"He was very much distressed at the prospect. And as Dr. Baring wished for my services——"

"Then you are going to stay in Rockston?"

"For a few months—possibly longer. We shall know our minds better by-and-by."

"You don't think Kenison is over-working himself, do you?"

"No," said Mr. Corrie, smiling. "He is only overworrying himself. Rather the worse of the two, perhaps, since it does nobody any good."

"But Ken's worries are not like other people's," said Kathleen, two bright spots coming into her cheeks. She had a very simple sisterly love and admiration for Kenison, intense in degree, the growth of long years, "He is so good—so earnest. It seems as if he had a feeling that he never could act up to his duty, and were always struggling after a sort of hopeless utmost, and despising himself for his failures. I think his humility is beautiful."

"I admire humility," said Mr. Corrie, with an odd expression.

"Don't you admire Kenison's?"

"My test in the matter may be different from yours.

Putting your cousin aside, and speaking generally, I have seen people despise themselves to a morbid degree, who yet could not endure the least touch of even deserved contempt from another."

"O no," said Kathleen, "that would be very hard to bear."

"Would genuine humility find it hard?"

Kathleen considered. "I see what you mean," she said. "Then very very few people are really humble. I have not seen Ken tried that way. But you are his friend—you must have seen how earnest he is—how afraid of not doing his very best."

"Yes, I have seen," said Mr. Corrie; "and I confess it does seem to me that Montgomerie toils too much like the slave with the taskmaster's lash behind him. There is a labouring sense of distress, an atmosphere of oppression,—so much to do and so little done, weighing upon him like lead,—and none of the quiet rest of a child in his Father's house. I don't say he does not realise God's presence, but it is not a reposeful sense. He seldom lies down in a green pasture."

"But there is so much need to toil," said Kathleen, thinking of her cousin's letters.

"So much need, that one is in danger of sinking into a mere machine, striving to grind out of oneself the utmost amount of horse-power within a given time. Is that the manner of service God asks of us? There can be no light-heartedness in it—no time for sitting at the feet of Jesus."

"I think Ken is naturally of an anxious spirit," said Kathleen.

- "And he carries that anxious spirit into his work, and looks upon it as a virtue instead of a vice."
 - "But if it is natural—if it is part of himself——"
- "A good many parts of ourselves have to be torn from us. If pride and ill-temper are natural to me—what then? But the same Lord who commanded me to be humble and meek, commanded me also not to be anxious. You don't know where? 'Be careful for nothing' is strictly, 'anxious in nothing.'"
- "Some people would have to be very much changed," said Kathleen softly.
- "That is a needs-be. The proud has to become meek, the faithless to become trustful, the rough to become gentle, the restless to become calm. Hard enough if we had to do it for ourselves. Not hard, if God does it for us."
- "And you think it is really wrong to feel anxious?"
- "Wrong to be mastered by the feeling. If you see signs of a coming storm, you are not wrong to read those signs. But to be overpowered by heart-flutterings and dread, argues a lack of trust. Suppose the storm does come, and the bolt does fall. The child has but to cling the closer to his Father's arm. He will be borne through."
 - "Always?"
 - "Yes,-always," said Mr. Corrie emphatically.
- "Leena, will you play us something?" interposed Mr. Joliffe from across the room.

CHAPTER VI.

HOME VEXATIONS.

What to do about Cleve? Kathleen woke next morning in utter perplexity, with that thought weighing upon her. Should she tell, or should she not tell? Speaking to her father would be identical with speaking to her mother. Mr. Joliffe never kept anything from his wife, never acted on his own responsibility without consulting her.

Cleve at breakfast seemed the same as usual, gay and full of fun. But Kathleen, watching closely with awakened fears, saw the change of which Miss Thorpe had spoken, a certain nameless something which was not the old fearless freedom. There was a slight shunning of other people's eyes, also a touch of reserve in answering questions as to plans for play-hours and half-holidays. Kathleen saw and heard with sinking of heart.

After breakfast, he was off to school, and she had her hands full. Joan was something of a care. Kathleen did not exactly know what to make of her. She had sat moodily silent and self-absorbed all breakfast-time, declining to eat or be interested; and Kathleen could see that her father, fretted

already by his wife's absence, was teased exceedingly by Joan's ways. He called Kathleen apart afterwards, to say with worried look, "How that girl does slouch!"

"I think Joan is poorly, papa. You know she is not strong, and she looks very pale."

"A good many people are not strong, but they don't think it necessary to sit at table in such positions as Joan. She lolls in her chair like a spoilt child, and I have seldom seen a more unpleasant expression. Something must have annoyed her. Cannot you find out what it is, my dear, and set matters right?"

"I will try," said Kathleen, not hopefully, for Joan had so far shown herself peculiarly uncommunicative.

"Yes, do—anything to make her look more cheerful. It is positively depressing to have her in the room. And Leena, my dear——"

"Yes, papa."

"About her dress. I can't possibly have her at our table in such guise as yesterday. This morning too—she might have picked up her dress secondhand at a pawnbroker's."

"It does not fit nicely," said Kathleen. "But she has pretty eyes, papa—if only they would sparkle and not look so dull. She says Mrs. Breay has grudged her every penny."

"Then it is not her fault, poor girl, that she is shabby. Get her some more dresses at once, like your own. Ask your mother about it."

"I don't think I must speak to her to-day, papa; Dr. Ritchie seemed so anxious that she should not have anything to try her. If you do not mind, I can go with Joan and choose a dress or two."

"Yes, do so, my dear, whatever you think she needs. I think Dr. Ritchie is mistaken about your mother, for it does her good to be interested. But of course we must obey orders. Don't put off on any account about Joan. She is a perfect eyesore to me now. And that hair!"

Kathleen had seen the untidy end dangling from beneath Joan's carelessly-arranged coil. "I am afraid I must not say anything about the hair till I know Joan better," she said. "Mamma would be the best person to speak—by-and-by. I am only six months older than Joan, and she might take offence."

"Your mother seems better to-day. How soon is she coming down?" asked Mr. Joliffe, who hated the least break in the family routine.

"Dr. Ritchie has not been yet. We must wait till he comes, papa."

Kathleen delayed only to attend to household affairs, and then finding Joan, said straightforwardly, "Is anything the matter this morning, Joan? Papa thinks you are not happy. Anything particular, I mean?"

Joan looked surprised, and said, "No."

"He thought, at breakfast-time-"

"I have not got over my journey," said Joan.
"And my back is so bad."

"I think Dr. Ritchie had better see you. I will ask mamma," Kathleen began, from force of habit, and then—"No, I am sure she would wish it. I will speak to Dr. Ritchie. Joan, dear, papa would like you to have dresses more like mine, only of course deeper mourning."

"I can't buy them. I have only five shillings. Mrs. Breay took care I shouldn't have much more than enough for my journey."

"Papa will get them, Joan, if you do not mind. He is rather particular how ladies dress. I think we had better go to the shop presently."

"I am sure I can't walk to-day," said Joan.

"Then I must go without you. Oh, here is Dr. Ritchie."

Joan glanced up with more of pleasure than she had hitherto shown, for his kindness the day before had made an impression on her. They had travelled down from London in the same compartment, Dr. Ritchie having been into the city for a few hours, and he had accidentally discovered her relationship to Kathleen. This morning, however, he seemed harassed and preoccupied, and though he shook hands with Joan, he said little to her. She shrank into her shell immediately, with a sullen air.

"I must not stay five minutes," he said. "I have an urgent call to a distance, but I would not go without looking in. How is your mother?"

Kathleen led him upstairs without loss of time, and they returned quickly, Kathleen saying, "Papa is very anxious to have her downstairs."

- "Not to-day," Dr. Ritchie said, "I shall be passing in the afternoon, and I will call again, but you must keep her quiet till then."
 - "And you think her better?"
 - "Better than yesterday."
 - "May Joan see her?"
 - "Not just now. Wait till I come again."
- "Dr. Ritchie, I wanted to ask you about Joan," said Kathleen. "I am afraid you have not time now."
- "Ah, Miss Breay told me yesterday that she was rather apt to suffer from neuralgia," said Dr. Ritchie, turning to Joan. "We must have a little talk on the subject another time. Put up your feet on the sofa, Miss Breay, and give yourself a good rest."

Joan disapproved this summary method of dealing with her case, and Kathleen came back into the room to find a very cloudy face. "I shall not," she said, "I shall not lie down unless I choose. And I never said a word about neuralgia. It is all his fancy. I told him I had had a fall and hurt my back. I don't like Dr. Ritchie nearly so much to-day as yesterday."

"He is very busy," said Kathleen apologetically.

"He has been up nearly all night, and he has more work to-day than he knows how to get through. I think you had better do as he tells you."

"I shall not lie down."

Joan was evidently put out. Kathleen could not imagine why, being unacquainted with Joan's habit of taking offence at trifles, and magnifying molehills into mountains. She had never before been associated

with a thoroughly self-absorbed and self-indulgent nature, such as Joan's.

"I shall go out," pursued Joan, assuming an air of determination.

"I don't think Dr. Ritchie meant you to walk," said Kathleen, with a touch of coldness, for this seemed to her childish. "But if you really feel up to it, we will go to the shop together. I can start at half-past eleven."

And at half-past eleven they went.

"If you please, Miss Joliffe, Miss Breay says she cannot come to luncheon," was the announcement which greeted Kathleen at table. Mr. Joliffe was already there, and Kathleen could not venture to go away. Disturbances at meals were apt to destroy Mr. Joliffe's appetite, and thereby to distress him. She only said, "Then please ask what Miss Breay will take." The answer was, "Miss Breay wants nothing, Miss."

Kathleen began to feel the burden of people and things rather heavy. Luncheon over, she hastened to Joan's room, and found her on the bed, with a tear-stained face. Inquiries met with scant response. "What was the matter?" Kathleen asked. "Could she get anything?"

- " No."
- "Would Joan go to sleep?"
- "I can't," said Joan. "Do leave me."
- "I am afraid you ought to have stayed in to-day," said Kathleen. "Is your back bad?"



"She hastened to Joan's room, and found her on the bed, with a tear-stained face."—Page 58.

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"Yes, but that isn't the reason," said Joan curtly. It is all those hours in the train—and having to sit up the whole evening after. It was enough to half kill one."

"O Joan, why did you not ask to go to bed earlier?" said Kathleen, grieved.

Joan turned her head away. Something like anger throbbed in Kathleen's heart, for she thought her cousin unkind. She had a struggle to continue speaking kindly.

"Joan, dear, don't be so cold," she said; "I would do anything for you that I could. Will you not believe me?"

Joan looked up, rather astonished. "Of course I believe you," she said. "I don't know what you mean. People are always cross when they are poorly."

"Mamma is not," said Kathleen simply.

"Well—I am," said Joan, "and I expect most people are."

Kathleen thought she had better drop the subject. "I will bring Dr. Ritchie to see you by-and-by," she said. "And I hope you will do exactly what he tells you, because it is right."

With which gentle rebuke Kathleen went out of the room to have her attention claimed in two or three different directions. Hardwicke kept guard over Mrs. Joliffe, allowing no one to approach her, and Kathleen consequently found herself in the position of general referee. She attended to each appellant in turn. Justinia, the last, remarked"Somebody is in the dining-room with papa, having such a long talk."

"Who is?"

"I saw him coming up the garden, and I am almost sure it is Mr. Harding."

"Mr. Harding at this time of day! He would be wanted in the school."

"I am almost quite sure," persisted Justinia.

"And he looked grave too."

Kathleen went to her mother's room with a serious face. Mr. Harding was Cleve's schoolmaster.

CHAPTER VII.

A THUNDERCLOUD.

"MISS LEENA, can you stay a few minutes while I go downstairs?" asked Hardwicke.

Kathleen consented, and sat down. Mrs. Joliffe gave her a smile, but seemed disinclined to talk.

Hardly two minutes passed before Mr. Joliffe walked in. Kathleen immediately knew that something had occurred to distress him. He was flushed and agitated, and his hands shook as if he had the palsy. Mrs. Joliffe too saw, and was at once aroused from her half-sleeping state. "What is the matter, Albert?" she asked.

Kathleen tried to warn him by look and sign, and even said, "Papa, please come with me for one minute," making a movement towards the door. But Mrs. Joliffe's hand checked her, and Mr. Joliffe neither perceived nor heard. He sat down in helpless fashion near the foot of the bed. "I am utterly bewildered," he said. "It is enough to knock a man down. Mr. Harding has been here, making the gravest complaints of Cleve. What have we all been about? The boy has gone wrong for months."

"Cleve!"

No other word escaped Mrs. Joliffe. She lay, breathing quickly, but otherwise calm. Her first thought was always of her husband.

"O papa, you should not—mamma ought not to be worried," broke out poor Kathleen, too late.

"Hush, Leena! I must hear everything," said Mrs. Joliffe, with the composure of strong selfrepression. "What did Mr. Harding say?"

"My dear, I hardly know how to tell you. I could not have believed it. He has found out Cleve in a perfect tissue of deceit, taking in him and us right and left, making friends with some of the worst boys in the town, breaking rules, going out of bounds. It is terrible! Mr. Harding seems grieved beyond expression - perplexed too. He says he really does not know whether to look upon the boy as consummately artful, or as a mere dupe of designing companions. I told him at first that I could not believe it-would not-and he gave me proofs. It appears that he found out Cleve months ago, in a comparatively small matter, but the boy seemed so penitent that he quite hoped nothing of the kind would occur again. He was wrong to hide it from us, and I told him so. He said he felt now that he had made a mistake, but Cleve entreated so passionately that we might not hear, and promised so earnestly not to transgress again, as quite to over-persuade him. Cleve! Why, I have always counted our boy the very soul of honour-never dreamt of doubting him." Mr. Joliffe covered his

face, and fairly groaned. "You could have knocked me down with a straw while he was speaking."

Kathleen's hand came on her father's. "Papa, don't," she whispered. "Mamma will be ill."

Mr. Joliffe stood up slowly, and came round to the side of the bed, where his wife lay, pale and stricken, yet trying to smile, lest she should add to his distress. "My dear, don't think too much of it," he said, with a feeble attempt at encouragement. "Cleve is very young still—and perhaps, by-and-by—if we can keep him out of the way of his companions—but that is the difficulty. Mr. Harding strongly advises that I should remove him at once from the school, and send him to a distance, away from his present temptations—"

"Not out of Rockston," broke from Mrs. Joliffe. "Not yet!"

"I was afraid you would not like the thought, and I told Mr. Harding so. He said it was the safest plan by far—but if you could not bear the parting, the only alternative was to watch him strictly. He recommended strongly a change of some sort—perhaps a private tutor for a time. We must think it over, and you shall decide. I must speak to Cleve. Mr. Harding has done so already this morning, and he says Cleve cried bitterly and seemed half broken-hearted, but so he did last time. It is not systematic deceit—I can't believe that of our boy. He is easily influenced, and has been led astray, and we must guard against the same influences in the future. But don't worry

yourself too much, Katie. If only we had known sooner—had been more observant—poor boy——"

Mr. Joliffe was making the matter worse, stumbling and choking tearfully over his attempts at consolation, and wearing a look of extreme dejection. Mrs. Joliffe lifted her eyes, with a pitiful smile on her white lips, and said—"Don't, Albert!"

"Poor dear boy! and we have always hoped so much from him. I could not have believed—have thought—I have such a horror of these first downward steps—it must be checked, at any cost—but if we can safely keep him with us still——"

"Papa, please leave the room," said Kathleen, in a low voice. "Don't say another word. Please leave me alone with mamma."

Mr. Joliffe was not easily dislodged. He tried to console his wife anew, went to the door and came back to the bed, nearly ended in tears afresh, attempted to discuss the matter with his daughter, wanted to know then and there what steps he ought to take, and was at length almost pulled from the room by Kathleen. She saw him to the end of the passage, made him promise not to return, and rushed back to her mother.

"Mamma, dearest, don't think too much of it. Please don't. Things may not be so bad as Mr. Harding fancies. Cleve is so loving—so fond of us all. I am sure we can do a great deal with him. It is only that he is easily led."

But the strain of self-command had been too great, and the return wave overflowed all barriers.

Mrs. Joliffe knew better than Kathleen the meaning of that "only." She raised herself in the bed, sobbing, with straitened breath. "O Cleve—Cleve—I cannot bear the thought. O Cleve! my own—my only boy—if I could but live, for your sake! Who will watch over you when I am gone?"

The words fell with a dull thud upon Kathleen's heart, and a sharp pain shot through her head. "Mamma!" she said huskily, and then she sat quite still. Mrs. Joliffe was weeping intensely, her boy's name breaking now and then through the sobs, but Kathleen could make no effort to bring comfort. Every faculty seemed frozen. She felt as if all the world had suddenly grown dark around her. But after a while, it occurred to her that this passionate weeping must not continue unchecked, and she stood up, in mechanical fashion, to pull the bell. Hardwicke, coming hurriedly in response, found them thus—Mrs. Joliffe overpowered by an anguish of sobs; Kathleen ashen-white and trembling.

"Sit down, Miss Leena," Hardwicke said, and Kathleen obeyed. She was dimly aware that after some time the sounds of distress lessened. Hardwicke came to her side.

- "Miss Leena, are you faint?"
- "No," Kathleen said huskily, "I don't think so."
- "You have been too long in this room. Do go into the garden, Miss Leena, and get a little fresh air. Dr. Ritchie will come presently, and I think your mamma will do now." In a lower voice she asked, "What was it made her cry?"

Kathleen had a bewildered look for a moment. "It was—it was—something papa said," she answered, recalling the fact with difficulty. Hardwicke asked no further, and she made her way downstairs, though not to go into the garden—that suggestion was forgotten as soon as heard. Her mind had grasped only one fact,—that Dr. Ritchie would shortly come. He could tell all—could explain the meaning of her mother's terrible words. She had forgotten about Cleve's misdemeanour, and the very existence of Joan had passed out of her memory. One thought alone weighed upon her, closing her in like a black pall, shutting out all lesser considerations.

Nobody was in the dining-room. Kathleen stationed herself at the window, and waited there, half-concealed by the curtain. She did not definitely think or look forward, and to pray was not possible. Her whole being seemed concentrated into an intense longing for Dr. Ritchie's arrival.

Half an hour passed, and Dr. Ritchie's carriage dashed up. He mounted the front steps, and Kathleen went slowly out to meet him in the hall. She took his hand without speaking, and led him into the dining-room, shutting the door.

Dr. Ritchie said nothing. He stood quietly, Kathleen's little cold hand still in his, and his kind eyes bent upon her with unspeakable pity. She asked him no questions, but her wide-open eyes searched his face, and the shadow in them deepened.

"What has happened, Kathleen?" he said at length.

" Mamma---"

She could say no more, and he did not press her. After a minute she spoke again.

"Papa has had a bad report of Cleve from Mr. Harding, and he came and told all to mamma. I could not stop him. It upset her very much."

"I am sorry for that. I must give Mr. Joliffe a warning for the future."

"Hardwicke is with her. I am afraid it has done her harm. She loves Cleve so much. I think it would break her heart if he went really wrong——"

"Shall I see her now?"

"Wait, please-"

He knew she had another question to put.

"Dr. Ritchie—" and again a pause. "Mamma—said——"

"Yes."

Kathleen's face quivered intensely. "I can't," she whispered; "I can't say the words. Is it true?"

" Is what true?"

"That—that—she—"

Kathleen turned away in an agony, and went to the window. She could not face him, could not stand any human look at that moment. To have to express her fear was like tearing open a deep wound. She thought him almost cruel not to answer her, while he hoped still that she might not know all. He believed that with Kathleen expectancy would be in a sense the worst part of the sorrow. She came back half-way to him once, only to turn again to the window. A second time she came and reached him, to stand with a look of dumb misery, as if awaiting her sentence.

"Why don't you speak?" she said, after two or three seconds, in a tone of suffering. "Oh, why don't you speak? It can't be true?"

"What did your mother say to you, Kathleen?"

"She said—said—about Cleve—when—when she was gone——"

The words went into a kind of sobbing wail, but Kathleen caught herself up and fiercely repressed the cry, pressing her clenched hands on her chest. "I want to know all, please," she said in an altered tone, and quite calmly. "I must know all. Is mamma ill?"

- "Yes," he answered.
- "Has she been so long?"
- "It has been long coming on, but she has been worse lately."
 - "Will she ever be quite well again?"
 - "I am afraid not."

She put both hands over her face, and stood with bowed head, in a crushed attitude. Dr. Ritchie's eyes were full. The next question came almost inaudibly—

- "Dr. Ritchie—how long——"
- "I cannot tell you," he said gently. "It may be much longer than any one would imagine. I have

seen invalids live for years after all hope of actual recovery was over."

- "This kind of illness?"
- "The same in a measure."
- "Is it consumption?"
- "Yes, with complications."
- "And nothing can be done?"
- "Yes,—you can do much. Everything depends upon sparing her fatigue and anxiety."

Dr. Ritchie placed Kathleen in the large easy-chair, and she submitted in a kind of powerless way, her head sinking down upon one of the broad arms. "I will see your mother, and be back presently;" he said, and left her.

Kathleen did not know how long he was gone. It might have been minutes,—it might have been hours. She was in no haste to see him or any one again. Her only distinct feeling was of utter weariness; her only distinct wish was to lie down and be alone. A sound of voices presently roused her, and she sat up slowly, to find Dr. Ritchie holding her wrist.

- "Drink this, Kathleen."
- "I am not ill," Kathleen said; but she obeyed, and then said, "I must go to mamma."
- "Not now, Miss Leena," said Hardwicke, standing by with jacket and hat. "She is better, and it would frighten her to see you looking so white."
- "Hardwicke will do all that is necessary for the present," said Dr. Ritchie. "I told your mother that I should take you for a drive."

"O no-I would rather not, please."

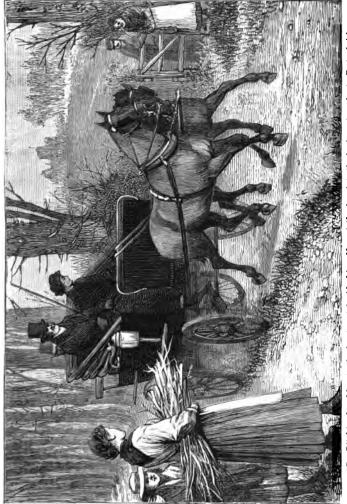
Dr. Ritchie disregarded the protest. He stood waiting, and she submitted to having her jacket put on. "But you are busy," she said, looking in a dazed way at him.

"I have a country patient at some distance to see, so it will not be lost time."

Kathleen made no further effort at resistance. Dr. Ritchie placed her in the front seat beside himself, sent the boy into the back seat, and set off at a brisk pace through Rockston and country lanes following. No remarks were made, and he was content for a while that fresh air and change of scene should do their work alone. By the time his destination was reached, he was glad to see the tension of the young face a degree less than it had been. He drew up at the front door of a large house, within a garden.

"Will you mind waiting here a few minutes, Kathleen? I shall not keep you long, I hope."

"I don't mind how long," she said, and the Doctor disappeared, while the boy went to the horses' heads. Sudden lull after rapid motion has something about it soothing to the senses. A kind of dizzy sleepiness crept over Kathleen. Her thoughts were awake, but she had not full control over them. It was very still, a grey November day, not cold, yet with a certain chill in the air. Few leaves hung upon the branches of the elms around, and those few dropped motionless, as if wanting energy to rustle. Kathleen had something of the same lack. A



"Dr. Ritchie placed her in the front seat beside himself, sent the boy into the back seat, and set off at a brisk race through Rockston and country lanes following."—Page 70.

. . .

nightmare sense of weight was upon her, a black shadow seeming to cut her off for evermore from the happy childhood and pleasant girlhood of the past.

But presently, while she sat there, white and drooping as any lily under the oppression of her new sorrow, there came a light into the darkness. She did not know how or why it came. Analysis of the gleam was not needed, was not possible. It did not come, as such gleams sometimes do, in the form of Bible words whispered to the heart. were no words; there was no distinct message. Only through the black pall which shrouded her, there crept a calm and soft pervading sense that God loved her, that a Father's arm was around her. This was definite enough, that all would be well. without words. It was the feeling of safety which a little bird has, creeping after terror under its parent's wing. It was the feeling of comfort which a little child has, lying, after a fall, in its mother's arms. No effort of Kathleen's own had brought the gleam, for she had had no power to make effort. There are times when the suffering child cannot even lift its eyes in appeal for help, yet the mother's cool hand will none the less be laid on the little one's aching head. Just such a tender and loving touch had come to still the throbbing pain of Kathleen's heart, at a moment when most needed: for with her mother she would lose all she had most loved, most clung to, most leant upon, in life. The more need for Heavenly stay and comfort.

Dr. Ritchie's absence was longer than he had in-

tended it to be, but when he came out he knew that the interval had not been lost time for Kathleen. Tears were stealing quietly down her cheeks, and the look of hopeless misery was gone.

"Are you tired of waiting?" he asked, as he took the reins.

"O no—I liked it," she said.

"I had a little talk with your mother about Cleve," he remarked presently. "She seems to think a private tutor in Rockston may be the wisest plan, and I suggested to her that Mr. Corrie might be the man."

"Mr. Corrie? He is-"

"I think he would like the work. He is acting as assistant to Dr. Baring, but not as full curate, and I believe he has had the idea of finding two or three pupils. Your mother seemed relieved at the idea."

"Dr. Ritchie, do you think she knows——" Kathleen faltered and paused.

"About her own state of health? Yes. About what she said to you? No, I think not. I am afraid it will distress her to find that she has put you to so much pain."

"I will take care," said Kathleen. "I will take great care. And you think that if—if she has not worries—it may make a difference?"

"It will make all the difference. Kathleen, can you let her see you happy still?"

She looked up at him mournfully, and he said, "I am very sorry the knowledge has come to you

so soon. But now that you do know, you must be brave and strong under the knowledge. If you are constantly dwelling on what may happen by-and-by, you will wear yourself out, and that will react upon her. You have a definite aim, to spare her in every possible way. Keep that before you, and take each day as it comes, but don't look forward. The future is in God's hands. Try to leave it there."

"Yes, only it seems so dreadful to know what must come."

"You do not know. Things may go on much longer than I or any one would naturally expect. Doctors are not prophets, Kathleen. Sometimes people in good health are called away, and sickly ones are spared. I cannot give you hopes of final recovery, but the rest of the matter is and must be uncertain. It must be so. You and I cannot look forward a single hour. How do I know that my wife and children will be living this day week? Should I be wise or right to dwell upon that uncertainty, and to let it paralyse my energies and darken my life?"

"O no," she said, drawing a long breath. "I will try—I will try not to look forward."

He left his words to work, and said no more until Rocklands was reached. Then there was only a kind hand-shake on his part, and on hers a low, "Thank you." She watched him drive away, and went slewly into the house, with shadows around her still, only she was no longer crushed beneath them.

Passing through the hall, a remembrance of Joan flashed into her mind. Poor Joan—forgotten all this while! Kathleen's heart smote her. She went first to her mother's room, and found her sleeping. Then she hastened to Joan.

"You have been gone a time! I thought you were coming back soon!" was the greeting she received.

"I am so sorry, Joan. How are you now?"

"Just the same."

"Joan, dear, I am very much vexed with myself," said Kathleen gently. "I meant to ask Dr. Ritchie to see you, but——"

"Has he been?"

"Yes, and I intended to speak about you, but other things came up "—Kathleen's lips were quivering over the words—"and I quite forgot."

Joan's self-importance was wounded. She did not know the reason, and Kathleen could not tell her. "Oh, very well," she said, in an offended tone. "It shows how much you care!"

"I am very sorry, Joan. I would send word after him, only he is so busy, and he has been here twice to-day."

"Of course—I quite understand," said Joan curtly.
"Where have you been all this time?"

"Dr. Ritchie took me for a drive, to a patient's house and back," faltered Kathleen.

"O yes, I see. It wasn't likely you would think of me when you were enjoying yourself. Of course I know I am nothing to you," said Joan, in a choked voice. Kathleen could not trust herself to speak. She tried to put Joan's pillow straight.

"Just leave me alone, please," said Joan sharply.

"And mind, Kathleen, I am not going to see Dr.
Ritchie to-morrow."

"I think you ought," said Kathleen.

"I shall not. So it's of no use your speaking to him."

"But, Joan, he will expect-"

"I don't care what he expects, or you either. I won't see him. You needn't stay there, fidgeting. I am going to get up now."

Kathleen could stand no more. She went away, with averted face, straight to her own room. There she locked the door, and knelt down beside her bed, in a dumb appeal for help. Only dumb at first. Words would not come, and the sobs which sought for utterance could not be allowed. But presently there was again a breath of comfort, with the sense of an upholding Hand. Let what would happen, she could not be alone. She thought of Mr. Corrie's words—"Suppose the storm does come, and the bolt does fall. . . . The child will be borne through . . . always, yes, always."

"He did not know how near it was, and oh, I did not," moaned poor little Kathleen.

But God her Father had known. Kathleen stayed her troubled heart there.

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY CATHERINE.

DR. RITCHIE'S wife was an earl's daughter—none the better or the worse for that, he was wont to say, with the merry look which his eyes could wear at times, when professional cares did not too heavily weigh upon him. Some thought she was the better for it. Few knew or cared that her father, though an earl, had been a spendthrift old gentleman of weak moral nature, who had left his only son a large portion of dire embarrassments, and his only daughter a large portion of disappointed expectations. She had accepted her portion philosophically, and her husband had done the same.

There was a charm about Lady Catherine Ritchie, apparent to most people, though many found her slightly awe-inspiring. Not that she was in the least degree stiff, or disposed to give herself dignified airs. She could, no doubt, "sweep it into a room so kinder splendid," like the Kentucky lady, but she rarely troubled herself to do anything of the kind, and her manners were ordinarily marked by an almost excessive simplicity. Mrs. Joliffe's graceful bearing had the ease of a perfect lady, yet remnants

of the shyness belonging often to a reserved nature clung about her still, and her ease might almost have been termed constraint, when viewed beside the absolute freedom and unconsciousness of Lady Catherine. There was not the smallest danger that the latter ever could or would do an unladylike thing, and the very idea of such a peril never occurred to herself. She was capable, however, of doing an odd thing in a ladylike way, facing the world with smiling unconcern as she did it; and "what might be thought" was the last question which troubled her in connection with her own actions.

One morning, early in the Christmas holidays, Lady Catherine stood in her breakfast-room—which was also her private boudoir, called by herself her workshop, and called by Dr. Ritchie her "consultingroom,"—making a long piece of holly wreathing. She was well at home in the occupation, as well at home as she could have been in cutting out flannel garments for the poor, and more so she could not be. Also she gave the same amount of pains to the one that she would have given to the other, for Lady Catherine never did anything by halves. A string was stretched across the room, and she stood before it in her easy fashion, with an air of quiet capability; a dark-haired woman of forty, slightly disposed to stoutness, with fresh complexion, and two brown eyes, each in a clear-cut setting. A fair little girl of ten, the eldest of the seven small Ritchies, handed sprigs of holly and yew alternately.

"Hard at work?" said Dr. Ritchie, coming in for a word, before starting on his morning round.

"It is not exhausting toil, my dear," said Lady Catherine, smiling at him. "May, run away for some more string. Miss Baring wheedled me into a promise to undertake so many yards for the infant school treat."

"You are not going out this morning?"

"Yes, I am," she said, immediately deciding to do so. "What do you want done?"

"I think it would be good for Kathleen if you could look in at Rocklands."

"Kathleen is growing very thin," said Lady Catherine.

"The strain upon her is too great. I always feared it."

"You were there yesterday, were you not? I forgot to ask you in the evening, we were so busy. How is Mrs. Joliffe?"

"No marked change. She has certainly gained a little strength the last few weeks. Kathleen's care of her could hardly be surpassed."

"Does not Mrs. Joliffe see the change in Kathleen?"

"She has remarked on her paleness, but she is not aware that Kathleen knows the truth about herself. Kathleen seems to dread the least allusion to it now. She is studiously cheerful in her mother's presence. I sometimes wonder how long she will be able to keep it up."

"Illness makes people a little blind occasionally-

mercifully, perhaps. You are not going there to-day, I suppose. But you would like me to see Kathleen?"

"If you can manage it. Miss Breay is another of her cares."

"I don't like that girl," pronounced Lady Catherine decisively. "She has a thoroughly ill-tempered look. Does she still refuse to be attended to?"

"So Kathleen says. I have not seen her lately."

"I shall advise Kathleen to leave her alone till she feels the need," said Lady Catherine. "I have a great idea of letting people be miserable in their own way. Does Mr. Joliffe intend to give her a home permanently?"

"He is drifting into it. She has no other home."
The Doctor took his departure, pausing in the doorway to stoop down and kiss little May. "Please, mother," she said, holding out a ball of string, "Miss Jackson wants to see you."

"Bring her here, May. I must go on with my work."

Miss Jackson entered, smiling and nodding exuberantly. "Now that is pretty!" she said. "It's just the kind of work that I like. And you do it so nicely too, neither too heavy nor too thin. What a clever person you are, Lady Catherine! Miss Baring asked me to undertake some of the same, and I should have been delighted, but Mrs. Montgomerie dreaded the mess, so of course I couldn't."

"One cannot get through life without an occasional mess," said Lady Catherine. "It never need last long Pray sit down and excuse my being busy." "That's just what I say," responded Miss Jackson; "no matter how untidy one's occupations, provided one clears up afterwards. Don't let me hinder you for a moment in your work. It is quite a pleasure to look at your hands. I am only come to bring a message from Mrs. Montgomerie. She begged me to see the Doctor, but of course he is busy, and I thought you would do as well."

Lady Catherine smiled thanks for the thoughtfulness.

"He has changed his day for coming lately. It used to be Wednesday, and now it is Friday, and the alteration makes her nervous. Don't think it absurd, Lady Catherine. Old ladies will have their fancies. Wednesday morning she regularly expects him, finds it a mistake, and frets. So I thought we might venture to speak."

"I will mention it," said Lady Catherine. "May, you can run away for a few minutes. How is Mrs. Montgomerie?"

"Oh—just so-so. She might be well, but she worries herself ill."

"Worries herself about Mrs. Joliffe?"

"It is that just now. If it wasn't that, it would be something else, Lady Catherine. Mrs. Montgomerie is one of those people who can't get along without a pet worry to occupy their thoughts. But this is something real, for once. She seems to have suddenly woke up to the fact that Mrs. Joliffe is failing. I saw it a year ago. Poor dear thing! The sweetest woman I ever knew, is Mrs. Joliffe.

But she isn't long for this world. What does your husband think about her?"

Lady Catherine took a bit of holly from the table, and ignored the question. "Ah, it is hardly fair to ask you," said Miss Jackson. "Not but what you might trust me. And, after all, I know well enough. I know a dying person when I see one. Poor Miss Joliffe! That is another fret of Mrs. Montgomerie's. She is dearly fond of the child, and Miss Joliffe certainly has looked white and thin lately,—quite unlike her old self. She doesn't seem to have her usual spirits either. Mrs. Montgomerie is always talking about it. If one says anything to Miss Joliffe, she smiles and says she is all right, but there is something melancholy in her smile. I don't like her look altogether-I really don't, Lady Catherine. Couldn't you persuade your husband to take her in hand somehow? One daren't speak to Mr. Joliffe. for he would only be off straight to tell his wife all about it. As for Miss Breay, she thinks of nothing in life but herself. I wish Mr. Kenison Montgomerie were at home for a time,—not that he would do much good perhaps, but Miss Joliffe might find him some support. However, it is the thought of those two that troubles Mrs. Montgomerie. She is of an immensely affectionate disposition; and now her eyes are open, she is at it night and day. I'm not sure that it isn't better for her than always fretting about her own ailments-still, it may go too far."

"How about the sermon-reading?" asked Lady Catherine, accustomed to these outpourings.

"Oh, it goes on just the same. I tried to make her take up that pretty little story you lent me the other day. No, she wouldn't—not she; she couldn't think of wasting her time over anything so frivolous. I suppose there is no waste of time in sitting crying over possible evils which may never come to pass! 'But, Mrs. Montgomerie,' says I, 'it was Lady Catherine lent me the book; you don't call Lady Catherine frivolous, do you?' And she answered, as sharp as a needle, 'Lady Catherine is a most estimable person except in that.' Oh, she won't budge an inch. I suppose it's firmness, but I'm not sure of the spot where firmness passes into obstinacy. 'I won't because I've said I won't 'looks weak—to my small intellect."

"Don't you think it is a matter of principle with Mrs. Montgomerie?"

"Principle gone crazy," said Miss Jackson, with rare brevity.

"I am not sure that that is an impossible state of things," said Lady Catherine, unable to help laughing.

"I'm quite sure the other way. Yes, it is principle of course, after a fashion. Most people have a principle of self-pleasing, at any rate, if they haven't any other. I don't want to be hard, Lady Catherine, though really people's principles are desperately inconsistent, a sort of hodge-podge of 'oughts' and 'likes.' But about Mrs. Montgomerie—the other day I thought I would try to do her a little good. She had been worrying for three hours.

fancying this, and dreading that, and expecting the other, till I really did wish she would have a good fit of screaming hysterics, and have done with it. So I found for her a most charming sermon by-I'm sure I forget who-on trustfulness and cheerfulness and anxiety,—and all that sort of thing," said Miss Jackson vaguely. "And she read it through quite properly, and then made some most nice little remarks about the duty of trusting God in trouble, and not fretting over His dispensations, and so on. I really thought she was quite impressed, and I haven't a grain of doubt that if she had tumbled down the next minute and broken her leg, or if the house had been burnt to a cinder an hour later, she would have thought it exactly the sort of dispensation she mustn't grumble at, and would have borne it like a heroine, for one day at any rate. But I suppose every-day fidgety worries are not to be counted as 'dispensations.' I know it wasn't half an hour after her pretty little remarks. before she was fretting just as hard as ever again about Mrs. and Miss Joliffe and the weather and her nerves."

"A good many people keep their religious principles and religious comforts for guinea affairs, and don't bring them into shilling and sixpenny affairs," said Lady Catherine.

"That's splendid," said Miss Jackson. "I never thought of that before. Why don't ideas strike every one alike, I wonder? How about the coppers, Lady Catherine?"

"I would include the half-pence and farthings. But most people put them into a sort of outside margin. Quite too small a thing to pray about, and therefore of course too small to use in God's service."

"I'll tell Mrs. Montgomerie. But she won't understand. She'll think you mean genuine coppers, and giving money in charity."

"I think Mrs. Montgomerie's depression is partly matter of temperament."

"Yes,—I believe that! It is family character. Mrs. Montgomerie has it, and Mrs. Joliffe has a touch of the same, only with more self-command, and Mr. Kenison Montgomerie has as much as any one, though it shows differently. Then I don't know that Mr. Joliffe is much better. Oh, it is natural temperament, no doubt,—but didn't Mr. Corrie tell us last Sunday evening that we had to overcome our natural temperaments?"

"I was not there."

"Well, he did. He said a man might be a liar by natural temperament, but the excuse would not serve; or a man might be a thief by natural temperament, but he would be none the less punished for stealing. That young man has rather a stern way of looking upon things, but one can't help liking him. By the by, Lady Catherine, do you think Miss Joliffe has any idea of her mother's state of health?"

If the question took Lady Catherine by surprise, she did not show it. "I can hardly imagine any

girl of twenty to be so unobservant as not to see a change," she replied.

"True; but Miss Joliffe is unobservant. At least I have always counted her so—something like her father. I do believe Mr. Joliffe wouldn't see if his wife were dying before his eyes, unless somebody pulled his coat and made him look. He would worry her now out of her wits about every fingerache, if Miss Joliffe wasn't on the look-out, and didn't stop him half-way. I must say that for her,—and it is seeing her so careful that makes me wonder if she suspects."

"Don't say anything to her, Miss Jackson," was Lady Catherine's reply.

"Not I! No, no, I never meddle. I am discretion itself, though you may not think it. That plan about Cleve seems doing famously. I believe it was Dr. Ritchie's suggestion, wasn't it? Cleve is growing wonderfully fond of Mr. Corrie."

Lady Catherine said, "Indeed?"

"Every one says so. Pretty boy that he is! I never can believe the tales that Mr. Harding told of him. He is the sweetest nature, never out of temper, and so passionately fond of his mother. I suppose he may be a little weak; those sweet obliging natures sometimes are. But I don't believe he could do wilfully what would grieve her. Of course things looked a little black, and Mr. Joliffe believed it all. However, it is a capital plan, his studying with Mr. Corrie. They say Cleve would do anything for him. Mr. Corrie takes him

"I would include the upon c stop But most people put the prc. Quite too sr margin. and therefore of cou; service." stand. giving money "I think 14 mر matter of to ard to look " Yes,- § at the fair pretty Mrs. Mc ant of deliberate duplitouch c r. Corrie had his doubts. and M every means in his power to one, ser influence over the boy, hoping knc' ch him entirely from evil influences. nø upils had as yet offered themselves, and C in no hurry. Mr. Joliffe had been willing her a sum which should make it worth his while so continue with Cleve alone, and love for the boy developed rapidly. He was a very watchful preceptor, acting no less as friend than as teacher, but necessarily he could not overlook Cleve more than partially. He had parish work, and the boy had always been accustomed to liberty. The Joliffes were entirely satisfied. Mr. Corrie was not. yet, however, he had not divulged his nameless sense of uneasiness to any one but Lady Catherine.

already knew her intimately.



The only person who drarrie. He asked to see Kathleen alone,
uired if Cleve were at home.

"No," Kathleen said. "He went out directly after breakfast, and has not been back since."

"I was not able to walk with him to-day as usual. He told me it was Olave's birthday, and said his little sister would want him."

"Yes; Justinia did ask him to go out with them," said Kathleen. "But he would not. He does not seem to care now for walking with Miss Thorpe. He told me he meant to see grandmamma."

"I am very much afraid he has not been there at all. Young Norris—you know him, I think—told me just now that he had seen Cleve in a lane with the Hopkinsons. He said that it seemed to be a concerted meeting, that they were talking and laughing together, and he heard something about 'Bell Woods' and 'rabbits.' If Cleve is going in for that sort of thing, he will get himself into serious

mischief. Norris mentioned the fact to me from a sense of duty."

Kathleen had grown very pale. "Do you think you can do anything?" she faltered. "Oh, how can Cleve?"

"I wish I could think it was only a sudden yielding to temptation. I fear there has been a deliberate scheme. This is the first day since the holidays began that I have had to leave Cleve so much to himself, and he knew it would be so."

"Justinia told me this morning that when she went suddenly into Cleve's room last night, he dropped something heavy, which she picked up, and she is almost sure it was a bullet. He was angry with her, and would not answer questions."

"Another link in the evidence," said Mr. Corrie.

"But bullets are not needed for rabbit-shoot-ing."

"Boys have a natural affection for bullets," was the answer; "and those Hopkinsons are up to any manner of mischief."

"Cleve saw my mother before he went, and he promised to be back to luncheon."

"I wish he may be. But no need to speak of all this to Mrs. Joliffe. I have an appointment at half-past two, which cannot be set aside. At a quarter to three I will ask at your door whether or no he has returned, and if not, I shall at once start for the woods."

"O Mr. Corrie, if he is going wrong again, after all your care!" said Kathleen sadly.

"Then the care must be doubled in the future. If I cannot bring Cleve right, God can."

Kathleen kept the words in her mind for future use, not knowing how she would need them. She gave him her hand silently, and he hastened away.

"If I could but go too!" was her heart's cry, yet she would not suggest the need to her father, in fear that he would not keep facts from Mrs. Joliffe. Hours of anxiety might work serious harm to the latter. Kathleen went about quietly, making light of Cleve's continued absence, and veiling her own uneasiness.

Luncheon over, Lady Catherine was announced. She sat talking to Mrs. Joliffe for a while, and then proposed a country walk with Kathleen. "It will do her good, for she has been looking pale lately," Mrs. Joliffe said, and Kathleen's eager reception of the offer surprised them both.

"Shall we go up the hills?" asked Lady Catherine, as they started. "The air is so still that we should not find it too cold."

"Would you mind the north road instead?" asked Kathleen wistfully.

Lady Catherine agreed at once, though again with a sense of surprise, the road in question being flat and uninteresting. They walked for some time in almost total silence. Lady Catherine asked at length, "Had you any particular reason for choosing this way?"

"Yes," Kathleen said at once; "I have a reason

—and I have been thinking that I must tell you. Mamma would not mind."

"If it would be a relief to you-"

"I think it would. I cannot say much to mamma now, and sometimes I do so want advice. But this to-day is about Cleve."

She gave all particulars slowly, pausing to consider her words now and then. "I thought," she said at the end, "that perhaps, if we came in this direction, we *might* see something of Cleve."

"Are not the Bell Woods too far for you?"

"No, but they would be for you. I did not suppose we should go more than part of the way."

"Well, we shall see," said Lady Catherine. "I suspect my walking powers are about equal to yours. How do you get on with your cousin, Kathleen? Is she becoming domesticated?"

"I think papa means her to live with us," said Kathleen. "He has not told Joan so yet."

"How will that affect you?"

"I ought not to mind, Lady Catherine. And I dare say in time we shall be more fond of one another. It would be different if mamma were as strong as she used to be. I do not exactly know how to make Joan happy. We are so nearly of the same age—only six months between us."

"And there are little matters, no doubt, which ought to be set right, but which you can hardly venture to speak about?" said Lady Catherine, with quick comprehension. "Joan gives one the impression of a self-indulgent person."

"Yes, and she has tricks that try papa. She lounges at table, and is not neat in her ways, and never puts away things that she uses. Papa has such a dislike to untidy rooms. And if I put away a book before Joan has done with it, she is vexed."

"An angular nature, evidently."

"Papa says she is all corners. Little things like that annoy him, and I am afraid I feel them too. But the least hint from me gives offence, and when she has her gloomy look papa gets depressed, and that affects mamma. It is difficult to keep things straight."

"She does not seem very capable of earning her own livelihood."

"No, even if mamma and papa liked it for her. She has not enough education to be a governess, and she could never be a companion. She has not the least idea of attempting to do what she does not like, or looking cheerful when she feels dull. And she thinks nothing of staying in bed to breakfast, or lying on a sofa half the day. And if she does not wish to do anything or go anywhere, that settles the question. She never seems to think about the 'ought.' She is always saying, 'I can't do this, it would tire me,' or 'I can't do that, it would make my head ache.' I don't want to speak unkindly, but it is so different from others. Mamma always did what had to be done, no matter what she felt, and the difficulty now is to keep her from doing too much."

"There may be a lack of the principle of self-denial in Joan."

"Yes, that is just it," said Kathleen. "Joan reads her Bible, and seems to want to do what is right, but there is no idea of self-denial—the self-denial of doing a thing because it is right, without minding her own feelings in the matter. It is strange."

"A trying nature to herself as well as to others, I should imagine," said Lady Catherine. "You do not find that you can make a friend of her?"

Kathleen shook her head. "I do not think Joan cares for me," she said. "And there is nothing in her to rest upon. She takes offence so easily, and I never know what mood she will be in next. Sometimes she is quite pleasant and gentle for a little while, and then a word or look will put her out, and she is vexed for hours. And yet—sometimes I do think Joan has a kind of love for better things, and a wish to be different."

"The discipline will come, I suppose," said Lady Catherine.

"Does it always?"

"To Christ's own followers, yes. I can't say whether she has taken any steps along that path. If she has, she will not be allowed to continue undisciplined to the end. If she will not voluntarily learn self-control, she makes some manner of sterner teaching, sooner or later, a necessity."

"And if I don't either?" said Kathleen in a low voice.

"I think it is the same with all God's children. My own belief is that as a rule His will is to prepare us for heaven by gentle means, and that often, when sharper trials come, it is only because we have made them needful by resisting the milder discipline."

- "It sounds rather terrible," said Kathleen.
- "Does it? But you would not have stunted and distorted plants for the King's garden. If sunshine and rain cannot do their work alone, the pruning-knife may have to be used. The gem for the King's crown has to be polished. If the friction of every-day life fails, rougher instruments must be employed. There is friction enough now perhaps—but what if Joan is not willing?" Then after a pause, "As for the best method of dealing with one of her temperament, I have one piece of advice to give. Keep calm."
 - "Yes," Kathleen said slowly.
- "Don't let the fact that she is ruffled, ruffle you. Speak to her kindly, if she will allow you; if not, take refuge in silence. Nothing but silence will answer with some tempers. Only do not let your moods be governed by hers. Try to live in an atmosphere above her fogs, and pity her so much for her weakness as to have no room for anger."

CHAPTER X.

SHOT.

THE distance to the woods was considerable, but the thought of Cleve kept Kathleen from flagging, and Lady Catherine showed no signs of fatigue.

"Hark! Was that a gun?" asked Kathleen suddenly, as they drew near.

"Shooting rabbits, no doubt," responded Lady Catherine. "I hope Cleve is not there. They have chosen their time knowingly. The Penleys are away for ten days."

"Perhaps friends are staying in the house, for a little shooting."

"No; I happen to know that it is not so just now. Dr. Ritchie was at the house the day before they left."

"There it is again!" Kathleen exclaimed.

"That is not rabbit-shooting," said Lady Catherine.
"It is nearer than the warren, and they are firing with ball. We must be careful."

"Ball!" repeated Kathleen, thinking of Justinia's information.

"Don't you hear the difference in the last shot from the one before?"

Kathleen was unpractised, and had not noted it. "But what can they be shooting with ball?" she asked.

"I don't know. I suppose it is the mischievous enjoyment of doing what they ought not." Lady Catherine looked a little anxious. "I must not take you too close to the woods," she said. "It would not be safe."

They went on slowly, listening. Suddenly there came the sound of two shots near at hand, and so close together as to be almost simultaneous. "Ball again," Lady Catherine said; and after a brief pause, a sharp cry of indescribable distress and anguish rang through the air, prolonged, and dying slowly.

Then silence unbroken.

The two stood still. "Some one is hurt," said Lady Catherine.

She looked round to see Kathleen, white and breathless, supporting herself against a fence. For one moment the thought flashed across her that Kathleen had been struck. The next she was saying quietly, "My dear, don't be frightened. It may be only a child's alarm. Has the keeper any children, I wonder?"

Kathleen could hardly draw her breath, and her lips were blue. "No, no," she panted. "It was—Cleve——"

[&]quot;That cry? It was a child's voice."

[&]quot;It was Cleve!" was all Kathleen could utter, but she spoke as if in certainty. Lady Catherine

recalled Cleve's high-pitched silvery tones, and hesitated. Kathleen might be right.

"We will see what is wrong," she said. "I think there was more of fear than pain in the cry. Can you walk, Kathleen?"

Kathleen answered "Yes" mechanically, but a minute passed before she could move. Then rousing herself with an effort, she said, "Please let us go on now."

Lady Catherine did not resist, and they speedily gained the woods, standing there outside the enclosing fence. No further sound broke the stillness, and it was a very still day. Voices would have travelled far. They waited and listened.

"It cannot be anything serious," said Lady Catherine. "A child hurt would go on crying, unless indeed it were taken home at once. But I think we should have heard more. You and I must trespass for once, Kathleen, if you are equal to the fence and the brambles. Or shall I go, and will you stay here?"

"O no please; I will come with you."

The climbing was not easy. Interlaced brambles barred their way, and had to be struggled through, to pain of hands and detriment of clothes. Lady Catherine managed for herself, and helped Kathleen also. Perhaps the exertion did the latter good. When landed safely beyond the outer belt of brambles she looked a trifle less colourless.

They paused again, partly for breath, and Kathleen gave a violent start. SHOT. 97

"Hush—I hear a moan——"

Was it, or was it not? Lady Catherine looked at the girl's white lips, and was inclined to ascribe the sound to imagination.

"I can hear nothing," she said.

"There it is again!"

Lady Catherine listened, and then took hold of Kathleen's arm.

"Don't faint," she said calmly. "Try to forget yourself, Leena. If it is a fancy, it is not worth fainting about; and if any one is really hurt, our help will be wanted. Listen steadily, and when you hear the sound tell me where it comes from."

Kathleen obeyed, leaning against a tree, and fighting against the feeling of deadly sickness which threatened to overpower her. "From there," she said, lifting her hand. "Please come,"—and this time she took the lead herself, pressing forward breathlessly.

They followed a little path under the trees, and reaching a bend in it, came suddenly upon an elderly man, hurrying in the opposite direction. "Holloa!" he said roughly. "You be trespassing."

"Yes, and I am sorry for it," said Lady Catherine.
"We were in the road, and heard shots fired, and I am afraid some one is hurt. There was a scream."

"It's them boys. I know 'em," said the man.
"I'll have 'em up this time and no mistake. I've caught 'em at it at last, though they did think I was safe off at t' other side o' the woods. I wasn't too far to hear what they was after. Rabbits! no,

—they was shooting with ball,—makin' a target of a old nest. I've knowed that trick afore."

"Did you see the boys?" asked Lady Catherine.

"See 'em—yes, that I did. And I know 'em too—leastways the two on 'em. I'm ready to swear in a court of justice it was them Hopkinsons. They're the worst-brought-up, unprincipledest lads in the county—no trick too dirty for 'em. There was a third with 'em to-day, a young chap, as it's a shame to see beginning such ways. I'll know him again fast enough, though I hadn't but a glimpse. He'd one of the guns."

"Then none of the three was hurt?"

"Not they—cutting and running like rabbits they was, just like rabbits, the little 'un looking dazed like, and the others draggin' him along. I don't know what scared 'em, for they cut across my path, and it wasn't me they had run from. I gave 'em chase for a bit, but I might as well have chased the wind. But I saw 'em plain for once, and I'll have 'em up, all three."

"Hush-oh, hush,---"

Kathleen said the words. She was listening again intently, only half heeding the old man.

"Some one is hurt," said Lady Catherine; "I hear it too."

"Then there's somebody else been a-trespassing," said the old keeper.

But he trudged quickly in the direction whence the sound seemed to proceed, the others following, not plunging deeper into the woods, only keeping a straight course parallel with the border. That brought them speedily to another side of the woods, facing east instead of south. The surrounding fence took a sharp bend just here. And there, outside the fence, upon a sloping bank of green grass, lay a silent figure, white-faced, senseless, dabbled with blood.

Lady Catherine and her companions made short work of fence and brambles. Kathleen had no sense of faintness. It was not Cleve—but——

They reached the spot, and it was—Marshall Corrie.

CHAPTER XI.

PARTICULARS TOLD.

On the afternoon of the following day, a young man stood outside the front door of Rocklands, carpet-bag in hand. He was somewhat under medium height, slender in make, with thin features, and eyes full of a certain impatient wistfulness. Two upright dents between the brows told of habitual contraction. He rang the bell mechanically, shifting his bag from one hand to the other; and without waiting for an answer he tried the door-handle, found the door to be on the latch, and entered.

Gas burnt in the empty hall, and a folded newspaper lay on a settee, where it had been flung, and had lain neglected. Kenison Montgomerie augured badly from this little sign. Things must indeed be going ill, he thought, if Mr. Joliffe cared not for the all-important daily news, so dear to the Englishman's heart.

He looked into dining-room, drawing-room, break-fast-room, study, in rapid succession, passing from one to another with swift noiseless strides, and finding no one within. The schoolroom came last. At

the first moment he could distinguish only a heap of blue serge on the rug, with arms and legs intertwined, and a thatch of chestnut hair surmounting; but then there was an exclamation, and the heap resolved itself into two. Justinia rose slowly, with a scared look upon her face, while Olave gave a subdued shriek, and flung herself into the arms of the new-comer.

"Olave! Mamma will hear," Justinia said reprovingly.

"O Ken, Ken, Ken, I'm so glad," gasped Olave.

"O Ken, nobody knows what to do, but you will know. You'll go after darling Cleve, won't you, and not let those wicked boys take him from us? O Ken, do! O Ken, do!"

Kenison Montgomerie sat down, with his nineyears-old little cousin on his knee, stroking her hair in a soothing manner. Kathleen's telegram had left him much in the dark, but he was not sure whether the children would be fully informed as to particulars, and he resolved to be careful in his questions. Olave's words, however, supplied a clue, and he followed it by asking, "Where is Cleve?" while Justinia came and stood beside him.

"Nobody knows," said Olave. "O Ken, he has gone quite quite away, and nobody knows where. He hasn't been here since yesterday morning. And O Ken, Wills says that if he doesn't come back our sweet mamma will die—and Cleve doesn't know—and nobody can tell him."

The child's distress grieved Kenison. "Hush,

darling, don't cry," he said tenderly. "Who is Wills?"

"Our new housemaid," said Justinia. "Hard-wicke said it to Wills, and Wills told us, but she said we were not to tell."

"Wills was very wrong," said Kenison. "Don't talk to her any more, either of you. She very likely quite misunderstood Hardwicke, and Kathleen will tell you all that you ought to know. Can anybody guess why Cleve has run away, Justie, dear?"

"I know what they are all saying, because Wills told us that too," said Justinia. "Everybody says it must be because he shot Mr. Corrie"—Kenison made an exclamation—"but Olave and I don't believe it," added the child resolutely. "And I am sure Leena doesn't."

"Shot Mr. Corrie!" was all that Kenison found voice to utter.

"Yes,—poor Mr. Corrie is dreadfully hurt. Didn't you know that, Ken? He went to the woods to see after Cleve, because he thought he was rabbit-shooting there with the Hopkinsons; and so he was, and they were shooting at the tree with ball, and Mr. Corrie was shot. Lady Catherine and Leena came upon him, lying on the grass, and the keeper was there too, and they brought him home. He is very bad, and they haven't got out the ball yet, and Dr. Ritchie doesn't know if he will live. And Cleve never came back at all, Ken,—never, all yesterday or to-day. The keeper saw the Hopkinsons and another boy running away, and Wills says it is

because Mr. Corrie is hurt, and they are afraid of being put into prison. And mamma is so ill-oh, so ill. She hasn't said one word for hours and hours, and when they first told her, they thought she would die. And Leena and Hardwicke can hardly ever leave her,-and that was why Wills came to see after Olave and me. O Ken, it has been such a day—and so was yesterday evening," said the child incoherently, pressing closer to him. "Nobody seemed to know what to do except Leena. Papa sat with his head in his hands, and only groaned. And Miss Thorpe screamed. That was how we first heard about Cleve. Wills told Miss Thorpe, and Miss Thorpe shrieked so that mamma came to see what was the matter. And she has been in her room since, nearly all day. She only came down once, and she was so shaky and crying that Dr. Ritchie said she must go to bed. And papa comes in and out, and looks so miserable, and says, every time-'No news yet of our boy!' I wish he wouldn't say it every time. The time has gone so slowly to-day."

"Justie said we ought to pray," murmured Olave, "and we did try. She said you would say we ought, if you were here. Will mamma get well, Ken?"

- "I hope so, Olave. She is in God's hands."
- "Yes, so is everybody," said Justinia. "People always say that. But everybody doesn't get well. He lets some people die."
- "Don't you think it would be sad if He did not?" asked Kenison. "I am not talking now of

people who don't love God, but of those who do. Think how many are weak and sad and suffering, and how weary they would be of living on in this world year after year, instead of being allowed to go to heaven. He does not leave the ripe fruit to hang uselessly on the tree. It has to be plucked for the King's own table."

But if Kenison had meant to comfort Justinia, the attempt was a failure. "Oh, I hope mamma isn't ripe fruit," Justinia exclaimed, with a burst of sobbing, and he had scarcely succeeded in soothing the tears away, when Kathleen appeared.

She did not seem surprised to see him, but came in with a swift step, and stood with her hand on his arm, her face very calm, though not with the child-like serenity that he had known in her hitherto. It was white as well as still, the dark-blue eyes sunken and seeming to have lost half their colour. Kenison kissed her brow, with a low, "My poor Leena."

- "Ken, it is a comfort to have you here," she breathed.
- "I could not get away sooner. Your telegram arrived late last night. You had mine?"
- "Yes. Come with me, please. I must speak to you."
 - "May we come too, Leena?" asked Justinia.
 - "No, dear; I want Ken alone."

They submitted at once, and Kenison followed her into the study. He placed her there in the easy-chair, which she would have offered to him, and took a seat beside her under the gas-light. "I can stay a few minutes," she said. "Hardwicke will ring if I am wanted. Ken, how much do you know? I want you to be able to act for us all."

"The children have given me some particulars. You did not mention Corrie in your telegram."

"I couldn't," she said, with a shudder. "It seems too terrible—such a return for all his kindness! I sometimes think it is all a dreadful nightmare."

"My poor Leena!" he said again.

"Don't pity me too much. I must not give way, and I want you to tell me what ought to be done. Papa is quite unnerved and bewildered, and I can ask him nothing. And mamma——"

"How is she?"

"I don't know—I can't tell. I dare not think. Dr. Ritchie does not say much. She has scarcely spoken a word, or seemed to know any one. Once last night we hardly thought she would pull through."

"And Corrie?" said Kenison in a low voice.

"Dr. Ritchie cannot speak decisively yet. He says Mr. Corrie's cheerfulness is in his favour, but there is the trouble about Cleve. His first thought when he became conscious was of Cleve. He is very very anxious that we should find him, but no one knows what to do."

"Does Corrie know who fired?"

"Two fired at once, and Cleve must have been one, for the keeper said he was carrying a gun. If Mr. Corrie knows which it really was who hurt him, he will not say. He is not allowed to speak much,

only when they first brought him round he would keep on repeating, 'Mind, there was no intention no intention whatever to do injury—they did not see me,—no intention, mind.'"

"Then he was unconscious when you found him?"

"Yes, and till after he reached home. Catherine bound up the wound before he was moved. If she had not, they say he must have died from loss of blood. But she did it beautifully. keeper went for men, and he was carried on a shutter, quite insensible all the way. I never shall forget that long dreadful walk. I don't think I could have borne it but for Lady Catherine. Before we started she spoke to the keeper, and made him promise not to set the police after Cleve. I thought it would kill mamma if it were done, and she knows the Penleys so well that she can answer for them. She promised to write to them at once, and to take all responsibility. The old man said he would do all he could to overtake Cleve without making a public affair of it. All Lady Catherine asked was just a day's delay till the Penleys could telegraph back their wishes."

"And then?" Ken said.

"Then we reached Rockston, and Lady Catherine stayed with Mr. Corrie, and sent me in a fly for Dr. Ritchie. He made me drive straight home, and told me to say nothing to mamma till after dinner, when he would come to us. I told papa, and he was dreadfully distressed, and went out at once for

more particulars. I don't know how I got through dinner, and when we had almost done, a report of what had happened reached the servants, and Wills told Miss Thorpe."

"The children say she was in hysterics."

"Yes, we heard her screams in the dining-room. I could not keep mamma from going to see what was the matter. The children were looking dreadfully frightened, and Miss Thorpe was sobbing and calling out about 'Mr. Corrie killed!' and 'Cleve run Mamma did not say a word. away!' down on the sofa, and seemed as if she were turned to stone, such a strange grey whiteness coming over her face. And just then Dr. Ritchie walked in. was so thankful. He seemed to understand at once. Mamma gazed at him in a wild way, and said, 'Cleve—Cleve!' as if she could hardly speak. He gave her his arm, and led her into the next room, and there she seemed to go off into a kind of stupor, not exactly like fainting. She made no answer when we spoke, and took no notice of any of us for hours, not even of papa. Dr. Ritchie says it is a more merciful form of sorrow than acute distress, but I can see how anxious he is. It seems so strange that she should ask no questions."

"Has she asked none?"

"Once or twice in a faint voice whether Cleve is found. When Dr. Ritchie says, 'Soon, I hope,' she sighs, and seems to lie and wait for his next coming, when she asks the same again; she does not ask me. I don't think she understands about Mr. Corrie. She

only seems to have grasped the one fact that Cleve is gone."

"Better so, perhaps."

"Yes, she would feel that terribly. Ken, only think, if we had not found him when we did, he must have died. Is it not terrible?"

"Is it not something to be thankful for that you did find him then?" he said, and she almost smiled.

"But what will become of Cleve?" she asked some minutes later, when he had gathered a few more particulars, as yet unknown to him.

"He is in God's keeping," Kenison said, much as he had said to Justinia, and with a different result. Kathleen folded her hands quietly together.

"Yes," she said, "that is my comfort. I have had it in my mind all day. God knows where our boy is, and He will take care of him for us. I am sure He will. Cleve would not stay away, if those boys did not make him. He always loved mamma so dearly, he would not willingly grieve her. It is they who have led him astray. But—if he fired the shot——"

"You must not make more of that part of the matter than the reality, Leena," he said. "The boys were guilty of trespassing and recklessness, and Cleve was guilty of disobedience. But even if Corrie should not recover, they would not be guilty of murder. They had not the slightest intention evidently of injuring any living person."

"And Cleve would be broken-hearted at the

thought of doing harm to Mr. Corrie. He was so fond of him. Ken, I believe you understand it all now, and I want you, please, to think what can be done about finding Cleve. It must be in your hands. Papa talks of advertising, but he seems to have no energy to act, and I cannot leave mamma, and there is no one else. Dr. Ritchie is overwhelmed with work. He was with mamma for hours in the night, and to-day he looks worn out, without a moment for rest; and Lady Catherine could not leave Mr. Corrie until the London nurse arrived. I did think of Dr. Baring, but we hardly seem to know him well enough. He has called twice to see mamma, and we took him to her at once, but she did not seem to know him. Every one has been so good, and Dr. Ritchie's kindness I could not describe."

"And nothing has been done yet about Cleve?"

"There are inquiries going on, and searching. But nothing as it should be. I have been longing so for you."

"We will lose no more time," Ken said, rising.
"Don't forget one thing, Leena dear. This may be just the way in which our prayers are to be heard, and Cleve brought back to safe paths."

Kathleen looked earnestly at him. "Do you think so?" she said.

"I cannot say positively. I do not know, but it may be so. I don't mean for a moment that Cleve's getting himself into this trouble was according to God's will. Still, Cleve is a child of many prayers.

and in one way or another they will be answered. I believe He will bring Cleve right at last."

"Yes—by-and-by," said Kathleen mournfully.
"I can believe that too. But oh, Ken, if he is not found now—quickly,—mamma will die."

CHAPTER XII.

DARK DAYS.

"IF Cleve were not found quickly," that was what every one was saying, "if Cleve were not found quickly, his mother would die."

The words rang in Kathleen's brain hour after hour; and Hardwicke spoke them in hushed tones to her fellow-servants; and Mr. Joliffe groaned them aloud, as he sat helplessly in his study, like ivy bereft of its supporting oak; and Mrs. Montgomerie played querulous variations on them in the ears of her companion; and Dr. Ritchie uttered them quietly to his wife. All knew the truth.

Cleve could not be found. Whether willingly or under coercion he had fled, and nothing could be heard of him or his companions. That bitter despairing cry had been the child's farewell to his home, a home which might have been all that his heart could wish but for his grievous suppleness of will.

It soon became known that the Penleys would not prosecute. For Mrs. Joliffe's sake, all concerned in the affair were only anxious to hush it up, none more so than Mr. Corrie, the chief sufferer, if indeed he were the chief. There may be suffering greater than that which is physical. Had it not been for Mrs. Joliffe, many thought that the Hopkinsons ought not to have been let off free, and many counted that a sharp lesson might do Cleve no harm. But Cleve was having his lesson. Inquiries were set on foot vigorously to discover the missing lads. Kenison threw himself into the search with energy, going hither and thither, writing, advertising, telegraphing, doing all that brain could devise and body carry out. But all was of no avail. The elder Hopkinsons professed entire ignorance of their sons' proceedings. "The boys would come right, never fear!" Mr. Hopkinson said. Some believed him to know more than he would confess.

Marshall Corrie lay for days at death's door. The bullet had taken a zig-zag course, passing perilously near the lungs. The first danger was from excessive loss of blood and consequent exhaustion, but other perils intervened. The bullet was extracted, and during some twenty-four hours following Lady Catherine scarcely quitted the room, even though the London nurse was there. Corrie's parents were dead, and his only sister was detained at a distance by her husband's illness, but Marshall Corrie had fallen among kind friends in his hour of need. He did not lack such nursing as a mother might have given.

There came then a change, and the "almost hopeless" verdict was exchanged for "rather better." He had much in his favour: a good constitution, a moderate mode of living, and a habit of cheerfulness.

The chief drawback was the weight upon his mind with respect to Cleve; and, through all, his intellect was clear. He could not be put off with half-answers, and he was eager, hour by hour, to know what was being done.

"I don't wish to be obstinate," he said one day, when rallying. "If Dr. Ritchie forbids me to hear, I will not ask, and I will try not to dwell upon the matter. But I think the strain of that would be greater than knowing the worst. I had heavy responsibility in the matter, you know." This apparently was all that troubled him; not his own sufferings, but Cleve's; not danger to himself, but danger to Cleve. He deeply felt also the distress of Cleve's parents and sister, and it had been impossible to hide from him the fact of the mother's illness.

"He is a fine fellow!" Dr. Ritchie said one day to Kathleen, and Kenison had not words of enthusiasm at command for the sufferer's docile patience and self-forgetfulness. Kathleen listened with a curious warmth of interest in the midst of her deepening trouble. It was the one thing which seemed to lie in a manner outside her surrounding fog. She had liked Mr. Corrie before, had esteemed him, trusted him, enjoyed his sermons, and found his words helpful. Now, as she heard Kenison's eulogiums, a kind of admiring hero-worship for the prostrate victim of boyish insubordination sprang up in her heart. She had always liked what Kenison liked, and admired what Kenison admired.

Days passed, and still Mrs. Joliffe lay in the same dull semi-consciousness. She did not at any time awake from it fully, and to make her take food was a matter of painful difficulty. She knew and would answer her husband or Kathleen, Kenison, or Dr. Ritchie, and any little attention was received with a customary "Thank you," courteously uttered, though faint. But mental sensation seemed numb, and when she spoke, Kathleen had a feeling of being addressed from behind a curtain.

Each day she grew weaker. That could be seen by all. Kathleen asked few questions; it was enough to study the Doctor's face, visit by visit. She knew almost as well as he did that life was ebbing away. Mr. Joliffe did not see and would not believe. Dr. Ritchie was not at pains so to command his face as that Kathleen should not read it. The time had come when preparation was needful for that which drew nigh.

Kenison was Kathleen's great comfort in those days. He was sometimes troubled by perplexities as to how long he should be right to stay away from his London work; but his rector was willing to spare him, and happily he did not impart his doubts to Kathleen.

She saw little of anybody else, spending most of her time beside her mother. Some attention had to be paid to household concerns, and to the comforts of father, sisters, and cousins. Kathleen went patiently through all necessary details, neglecting nothing; yet every minute away from her mother's side was pain and strain to her.

Many friends came to inquire after the invalid, but Kathleen saw none of them. Dr. Baring was the only exception. A day rarely passed that he did not call, and once in a while he was admitted to the sick-room. Mrs. Joliffe did not know him, however, neither did she respond to aught that he said, and prayer and Bible words seemed alike to make no impression. Once, when they knelt, he tried the effect of slowly repeating the words of the General Confession. She stirred at the familiar sounds, clasped her hands, and softly uttered half-sentences after him. Then he rose, and said, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin,"—and she whispered, "Yes,—all."

A great longing grew up in Kathleen's heart for something of clearer intercourse before the end. She did not feel as if she could bear the parting without it. Nobody saw the passion of longing, as she went about, pale and low-voiced, in her new calm, a calm not only on the surface. She could not have talked much of her feelings, but through all she had the child-like sense of a Father's clasping and supporting hand. Even on days when definite prayer became an impossibility, she could still look up and see her Father's pitying smile. Well was it for Kathleen that in hours of sunshine she had learnt so pure and simple a trust. She suffered keenly, but she did not question or doubt.

The calm broke down one evening. Mr. Joliffe was out, and Kenison coming into the study, found Kathleen kneeling on the floor in an agony of sobs,

her head bowed down upon the open page of a small book. He lifted her up, and made her sit in the chair, and comforted her with tender words, which at first increased the sobbing, but presently helped to still it. The little book he kept open in his left hand, and her first words, when voice returned, were—"Please give me that."

"Was it this which upset you, Leena?"

"Yes; don't lose the place. Ken, do read it to me."

"I don't think you can bear it just now," said Kenison, glancing down the page.

"Yes, I can—I must. I have to learn the lesson. Please read it."

Kenison had some difficulty in commanding his voice to obey:—

"'Master, say on! Thy words are sweet;
I hush my heart to hear;
I wait in silence for Thy voice,
That is so true and clear.
It quiets all unrestful thought,
It stills the throbbing brain,
It soothes, like hymn from mother-lips,
The weary ache of pain.

"'Is it indeed the Master's voice?

It speaks in altered tone;

It bids me follow through the dark,

And bear my cross alone.

It bids me leave the pastures green,

Where quiet waters flow,

And climb the rugged mountain height

That lieth cold in snow.

"'Oh, no, not there. My steps are weak,
There are dear faces here—
There are dear hands I clasp in mine,
Dear voices in my ear.
I cannot leave the sunny way,
And take that heavy cross;
I cannot bear to wake and sleep
With bitter sense of loss.

"'Once more He speaks. No stern rebuke,
No anger in the word:

"Is it so hard to turn from all,
And walk with me, thy Lord?
I do not say the way is fair
For tear-dimmed eyes to see,
I only say, through all its pain,
Thy heart shall lean on Me.

""Come! thou hast never heard My voice,
As thou shalt hear it now;
I have no words for brighter days
Like those the dark ones know.
I cannot speak them here; yet come—
The desert-path lies bare,
And better far the wilderness,
If I am with thee there,""

He had a break in the middle; the last two lines of the third verse brought a shuddering thrill, and Kathleen sobbed, "O Ken, I can't, I can't," and then—"But go, on please," and he reached the end without further interruption.

"Leena, that is true," he said softly at the close.
"Christ has words to speak in dark days which He does not speak in bright ones."

"If I could only feel it," said Kathleen. "If I could

only feel that it would be better with Him, than with—— But I can't; I only long to have back the old happiness. O Ken, it was such happiness. I only feel like those other words, 'I cannot bear——' O Ken, it is so very very dreadful, the feeling that one day more is gone—one day less, till—till——"

"It will be a different kind of happiness from the old. But wait, dear, wait till He speaks. The pain must come before the comfort. I think He does bear you up, and He will do it more as the need grows more."

"Only, every day it seems as if I could not keep on—could not bear the pain. You love her dearly, —but you don't know—you don't know—I feel as if all the world were nothing to me beside her. And if she should not know me—should not talk to me again"—

- "Dr. Ritchie thinks she will."
- "Does he? I could not ask him. I did so want to know. He thinks she will wake up, and be more like herself?"
 - "He thinks it very probable."
 - "Only that-not sure!"
- "No, but very probable. If not, it might spare her some sorrow. She would be so grieved to know all. Still, I think he expects a change. The shock has affected her strangely, but he does not expect this state to continue."
- "If Cleve were found!" murmured Kathleen.
 "If Cleve were but found!"

"That might cause a rally—for a time," said Kenison, in a low voice.

But only for a time. Both knew it, and neither now had much hope, if any, that Cleve would be quickly found.

CHAPTER XIII.

AWAKING TO SLEEP.

THE awakening came, and it came suddenly, not gradually, as Kathleen had pictured to herself.

She was sitting by the bedside one day, alone in her watch. The nurse was sleeping in the next room, having sat up all night, a night of exceeding oppression and restlessness to the invalid, and Hardwicke was gone downstairs. A slant gleam ofwintry sunshine crept in below the venetians, and the ticking of the clock alone broke the stillness. It was a very quiet house, those days. Dr. Ritchie had thought Mrs. Joliffe worse in the morning, and Kathleen was aware of it, though he did not put the thought into words. Mrs. Joliffe had seemed to know him more distinctly than usual, and had spoken with unwonted clearness; but his parting words to Hardwicke were, "Call me, if there is a change." Since then she had been sleeping.

"Kathleen, darling-"

Kathleen had heard no sound that told of waking till those two words came. There was a naturalness in the gentle tone, unlike the constrained utterances of late. Trembling inwardly, but outwardly collected, she stood by the bed. "I think I am better this morning," Mrs. Joliffe said.

"I think you are, dearest mamma; your eyes look brighter."

"I have had such a strange weight upon me lately. Have I not seemed very absent?" She did not wait for an answer, but went on, "No news of Cleve?"

"Not yet," said Kathleen softly. "By-and-by----"

She knelt down, and laid her face caressingly against her mother's, and Mrs. Joliffe said tenderly—

"My own comfort."

Kathleen could hardly control a sob.

"I have tried you all sadly of late, I am afraid. I don't like to see those thin cheeks. But I am going to be patient now. God will take care of my precious boy."

"O mamma, you always are patient."

"Only outwardly, not in heart. I have doubted sadly—distrusted, when I might have been so sure. I think—it must grieve *Him*. He knows what is best."

"One can't always see that at the time," said Kathleen.

"No. It is easy now for me, harder for you. I think—I am waking, darling—waking to—to——"

The voice died away, as if she were too weary to continue, and a sigh came in its place.

"Don't talk now," said Kathleen earnestly. "Dr. Ritchie would say you ought not."

"Kind Dr. Ritchie. He will be a friend to you—and dear Lady Catherine too. And Leena, my child, you will be dear papa's comfort—you will take care of him."

Kathleen clenched her hands, and smothered the cry of, "Mamma, don't."

"And when Cleve comes home---"

Again the voice failed.

- "Yes, darling mamma."
- " Tell him-"

Kathleen could not catch the faint mutter. "Mamma, you ought to rest now. You must talk to me another time," she said.

- "Yes, another time—by-and-by. God will bring him home to you all." She did not say "to us."
- "I am sure He will, mamma; perhaps very soon."

Mrs. Joliffe looked earnestly across the room, and Kathleen involuntarily followed the gaze, but could find no cause for it.

- "Do you want anything?" she asked gently.
 "Shall I call——"
- "No—hush"—and a strange sweet smile flitted across Mrs. Joliffe's face. "Hush—I heard——"

Kathleen waited, awe-struck, as the gaze again grew intense.

- "Don't call papa," said Mrs. Joliffe. "Better not. He would be so tried. What was I saying about—about—"
 - "Cleve, mamma?"
 - "No, no! Cleve?—no. About——"

Another Name came into Kathleen's head, and with it a rush of unshed tears. Strange to say, she did not realise the meaning of all this. She had never been in the presence of death. She was only bent upon hearing every word which her mother might say.

"Mamma, are you thinking about Jesus?"

Mrs. Joliffe smiled again, and pressed her hand. "No fear—no fear," she muttered dreamily.

"He is with you, isn't He?"—Kathleen's quivering tones said.

"So near. O Leena, darling, never never doubt His love."

And then, with a sigh, "I am going to sleep. Kiss me."

Kathleen obeyed, restraining herself to do it calmly. Mrs. Joliffe closed her eyes.

"Tell papa—tell Cleve—"

But the messages were not uttered. Kathleen lifted her eyes, and found Hardwicke by her side. "Hardwicke, mamma is different," she breathed. "She has been talking to me."

"Yes, Miss Leena." Hardwicke went away, and sent a messenger for the doctor.

The messenger found Dr. Ritchie out, and more than an hour passed before he could come. But it made no difference.

"Is mamma better? She said she was," Kathleen questioned outside the sick-room, with a kind of wild hope, beneath which lay a sense of the reality. Yet that reality fell heavily. Dr. Ritchie would not

veil it from her. Mrs. Jolisse was dying. Nothing more could be done.

"How long?" asked Kathleen, as she had asked before, when it was a question of months, not hours.

"She may last through the night—not longer, I think."

"Will she speak to me again?"

"It is not impossible, but I hardly expect it. Better not, perhaps, for her, Leena. It might be only waking to pain."

Kathleen clasped her hands with a dreary gesture. "I ought to be glad that she is going to rest—but I don't think I can be. Please, will you tell papa? I can't."

"I will speak to him. Would you like me to look in again presently?"

"If you please. Dr. Ritchie, will there be much suffering?"

"I think not. I hope not."

He pressed her hand compassionately, and passed on. She was grateful that he made no attempts at consolation. The time for that was not yet come.

Kathleen went back to her watch by the bedside, and they could not draw her away. Hour after hour she sat there, tearless and still. Mr. Joliffe came in, but he was unable to endure the sight, and his distressed sobs brought a shadow over his wife's still face. She put out her hands and said, "Take him away—take him away."

Kenison obeyed, Mr. Joliffe yielding to him like a child. Mrs. Joliffe took no further notice, but when Kenison came back, he asked them all to kneel in prayer, thinking she might understand. No sign was made till he had done, when she whispered, "Thank you," and then, "The children." Kenison brought them in, Justinia quietly tearful, Olave pale and awe-struck. They kissed in turn their mother's face, and she said something fondly in a low tone, the words of which could not be distinguished. Olave burst into frightened sobs, and the two were led out of the room. After that there were no interruptions. Mrs. Joliffe lay breathing quietly, with no signs of suffering. Once only Kathleen heard a murmur of her own name, followed by—"Tell Cleve—he must come—"

Then she slept again peacefully, and spoke no . more. The sleep deepened calmly into death.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TIME FOLLOWING.

It seemed as if the stupor which had overpowered Mrs. Joliffe's faculties passed from her to Kathleen. Until the last Kathleen bore up, but then she gave in like a worn-out child. There was no violent expression of grief. She allowed herself to be led into another room, and there she slept heavily, a twenty-four hours' sleep, unbroken except when it was needful to arouse her to take food. Hardwicke watched over her devotedly, and Dr. Ritchie was in and out from time to time. But the sleep, albeit one of exhaustion, resulting from lengthened strain, did not appear to be unhealthy in character, and probably it saved her from severe illness.

Kathleen awoke that evening to a clearer sense of things and of the responsibility resting upon her. Sense came back slowly, as she lay on the sofa. First a recollection of the mournful reality; then all her mother's last words, standing out in letters of gold upon her mind; then a rush of overwhelming sorrow; then a strong consciousness that she had work to do, sisters to care for, a father to comfort, her mother's empty place to fill. She sat up on her couch, and looked round, oppressed by a sense of

loneliness. Strange to say, she was at that moment actually alone, as she had not been through all her hours of sleep. Hardwicke was resting, and Kenison, keeping watch in Hardwicke's absence, had been suddenly called away.

"Mamma!" was the first word her lips uttered; and next—"But I must be brave. I have so much to do now. O God, help me."

She stood up, moving slowly still, for a weight was on her, and the ground seemed to slant in uneven layers; but she would not be overcome. "I must find papa, poor papa!" she murmured.

Nobody was in the hall. She went up the first flight, pausing now and then for breath. To seek her father had been her first thought, but another aim intervened. She made her way to her mother's room, turned the key, and entered.

No thought of fear was in Kathleen's heart, yet she trembled, partly from weakness, partly from the awe which is natural to all in the presence of death.

But the wasted face was very fair and sweet, with a strange wax-like beauty, and a look of holy calm. The expression of restfulness crept into Kathleen's heart, and stilled her very trembling.

No more sorrow, no more pain, no more anxiety—for her. Why could not Kathleen be glad for that precious mother—

"At rest from all the cares of life, from its night-watches drear,

From the tumultuous hopes of earth, and from its aching fear?"

Such a change for her,—victory after wrestling, peace after pain, calm after tumult, repose after weariness. Why not? Kathleen thought she would be glad, would rejoice in the joy of one so dear to her. And then the great tide of her own desolation rolled in upon her, and she sobbed aloud in her passionate anguish—"Mamma, mamma, I don't know what to do—I cannot live without you."

Mr. Joliffe, passing outside, heard the sounds and came in. He shut the door and took a seat beside the bed, bowing his face in his hands. It flashed across Kathleen anew that she had to be his comfort, and she knelt down, and laid her face on his shoulder, and was folded in his arms, with a clasp of exceeding tenderness.

But even in that moment Kathleen knew well that the clasp was not one of support and protection. She knew that she would have to be his support, not he hers; that she would have to care for him, not he for her; that she could not hope to lean upon him, but must expect him to lean upon her. With such men as Kenison Montgomerie, as Dr. Ritchie, as Mr. Corrie, she felt that there would be in an hour of need the sense of rest on her part and of upholding on theirs,—a sense dear to the heart of every true woman. But with her father, much as she loved him, she knew well it would not be so. She would have to be strong, for he would be weak.

"Papa, we must not grieve too much. See how happy she is," Kathleen murmured. "Isn't it

wonderful, that look of peace? She will never have anything again to try her. Don't you think we ought to remember that, and not to think only of our own loss?"

Then she softly told him of her mother's last words, each one of which was so clear in her memory. "There never was any one like her," he said brokenly as he listened. "My Katie—my sweet self-sacrificing Katie." Yet it never struck him that any portion of the self-sacrifice in her life might have been prevented by the exercise of a little self-denial in his. The thought did occur to Kathleen, and she put it away from her as treason, and clung the closer to him.

"Papa, I can never, never take her place," she said, dropping large tears quietly so that he might not see them fall, and thereby beginning already to tread in her mother's footprints. "Nobody could ever do that. But I want to be your comfort, as she told me. You will let me, won't you? You will tell me everything that troubles you, and let me try to manage for you—just as——"

"My dear child!" and he kissed her brow.

"My dear good little Kathleen. Yes, I know you will do all that is possible—all that you can. Nothing can ever fill the blank. I must carry it with me to my grave. Nothing can touch that. You shall do what you wish, anything you like. I have no heart to care now how things are managed. But if you knew what my precious Katie was to me—"

Kathleen thought she did know, and her heart throbbed impatiently against the words, yet she only answered softly—

"I know what she has been to me, papa. I think that helps me to know what she has been to you. But you will let me be your comfort—as much as can be,"—— and a sob burst from her, despite all efforts.

He took her in his arms afresh, and called her tearfully "his little comfort," which was what she wanted; yet as he did so, she almost thought her heart must break with its craving for that other sweet supporting clasp, which had been so much more to her than this could ever be. At least so it seemed at the moment. We are always apt to value what we have lost at a higher rate than what we retain. And dearly as she loved her father, she could not but be conscious of the weaknesses of his character.

Then she slipped her arm in his, and persuaded him to go downstairs with her, hiding from him the fact that she could scarcely have walked without his help. On the way she met Kenison, and in answer to his exclamation she only said,—"I have been with papa," and did not add where. "I think I should like to have tea in the study with papa to-night," she whispered, as she lay down again on the sofa.

"Will you have it alone with him, Leena, or shall the children come?" asked Kenison.

"I think alone to-night," she answered softly.

"Papa could not stand the children. Please look after them for me, Ken, dear. I am so sorry, but it might distress papa, and you know I have to think of him first."

These words were a picture—an epitome—of Kathleen Joliffe's opening phase of life. She had to think of her father first on all occasions. She would be careful for others also, but the recollection of him must invariably come first. He was her especial charge, given over into her hands by her dying mother. Kathleen felt it to be an eminently sacred and solemn charge, one which had to take precedence of all others. Henceforth her aim should be to live for him. So far as lay within the bounds of possibility, she was resolved to be to him all that her mother had been.

She had time enough for thinking the matter over during the next few days before the funeral, while she was still too weak to take her place in the household circle. Even then she was perpetually at watch for her father's comforts, perpetually uneasy if she could not be with him. The funeral over, Kenison went back to his London work, and Kathleen entered upon a new era of existence.

Setting before her mind's eye the model of her mother's home-life, she sought to follow it constantly. Thenceforth she would permit herself little indulgence in sorrow. The past months had afforded a training in self-command, and the training now took fruit and continued. There about her,

knowing her intense love for the mother that was gone, marvelled at her habitual composure. If she gave way to weeping, it was at times when her father could not see or hear, and when no after traces should be discernible.

He was not observant, as Mrs. Joliffe had been, and tear-traces, unless very distinct, were not quickly detected by him. Neither were symptoms of physical weariness and languor. A certain studied cheerfulness of manner was quite sufficient to convince him that all was right. And Kathleen never complained, never acknowledged herself too tired to do his will. Morning, noon, and night, she was at his beck and call.

There was danger that Kathleen, in her inexperience, and with her ardent nature, would go too far. Constantly endeavouring to copy her model, she outdid the original.

Mrs. Joliffe had lived a life of self-sacrificing devotion to her husband. But she had not counted it necessary to sacrifice the comfort and peace of everybody else at the same shrine, dragging a crowd of unwilling victims in her wake. She had weighed and balanced her divers duties, giving to each its due position.

Kathleen fell short here. She drew no line between reasonable and unreasonable devotion to a single object. Constantly haunted by her mother's dying injunction, she constituted herself her father's slave, and she did not see how, by so doing, she was ministering to the weakness of his nature. It gradually became an acknowledged fact that Mr. Joliffe could do nothing without Kathleen. If he walked, he required her to walk with him; if he drove, he required her to drive with him; if he read in his study, he required her to sit with him; if he had a letter to write or a call to pay, he required her to act with him. He was grateful at first for her companionship, but he speedily accepted it as a matter of course.

Other calls had to be attended to between whiles, when and how she found possible. Housekeeping was not neglected, for neglect in that direction would have affected his comfort, and also Kathleen was conscientious in her daily duties. The dinner was as 'well served, the household appeared to be as orderly in its routine, as it had ever been. But that matter of "his comfort" was the centre round which her thoughts and actions moved.

In one sense this absorption was of service, since it drew her thoughts away from her great loss, and prevented the depression into which she might have sunk. On the other hand, she had no repose in her life. The strain was unceasing.

With her mother she had ever had the placid sense of a little bird under its parent's wing. With her father she had the perpetual sense of something to be done. He had to be comforted, or to be amused, or to be kept cheerful, or to be advised, or to be prevented from worrying himself. Between whiles, when for short intervals not required by him, she was drawn to and fro between a ceaseless rush

of unmet claims. Letters had to be written, calls had to be paid, people had to be seen, household matters had to receive attention. Kathleen panted wearily on, never overtaking a tithe of these claims, yet ever ready with a sweet smile and disengaged air to respond to her father's slightest wish.

Her own health was in danger of suffering, and the household comfort did materially suffer. Miss Thorpe's nerves and Joan's humours grew worse, from being under no sort of supervision. Both were suppressed in Mr. Joliffe's presence, and Kathleen was rarely out of that presence, except during brief rushes of business. She did not know how greytoned an existence her little sisters were living, nor how they grieved in their hearts for the mother that was gone, and the Kathleen of former days.

Yet nothing of this showed beyond the family circle—if that circle included Mrs. Montgomerie's companion. Rockston in general admired Kathleen's single-hearted devotion to her father, and counted that nothing could be prettier than his air of tender and melancholy affection towards her.

Not that Mr. Joliffe was in reality so brokenhearted a widower as he was believed to be by himself and Kathleen. A pensive manner and a tendency to sigh frequently were natural to him, but after the first few weeks he was quite as cheerful as could possibly have been expected, and by no means devoid of interest in life.

Mr. Joliffe had loved his wife exceedingly; but there are different kinds of love. There is love poured out upon an object for what that object is intrinsically; love of appreciation, esteem, admiration; love that springs into life because the object is lovable, altogether independently of what that object is to the one who loves.

There is also the lower and commoner form of love, which consists in bestowing affection upon another, because of what that other is to oneself. Mr. Joliffe's feeling for his wife had been largely of this nature. She had been necessary to his happiness, and because she was so necessary, he had clung to her, had leant upon her, had felt that he could not live without her. He had, in short, loved her dearly for what she was to him. When he lost her, his principal pain was the pain of having lost something necessary out of his life. He was uncomfortable, unhappy; and at every turn he was reminded of her. But his was not the deeper agony which the deeper kind of love would have suffered; and when Kathleen stepped into her mother's place, supplying his every want, attending to his every fancy, his sorrow soon became less acute.

He looked sad frequently, and tears rose to his eyes at any mention of "his Katie." Nevertheless the manner in which he once leant upon "his Katie" had speedily become the manner in which he now leant upon "his Leena." Like ivy which has lost one supporting trunk, he had found another.

CHAPTER XV.

DIVERS WAYS.

"How d'you do, Mr. Corrie, how d'you do? Dear me, I am glad to see you again! And you really can manage to walk as far as this! I don't think you look quite fit for it, I must say. I wish we were nearer home, and I could ask you in to rest."

Miss Jackson's vigorous steps had overtaken the slower paces of Marshall Corrie, as he toiled up a short hill. Miss Jackson's greeting was received with a wordless smile and extended hand.

"Now you'd better take my arm. You are tired, poor man! I wonder what Dr. Ritchie would say to your coming all this way."

"I had his leave to make the attempt," said Marshall Corrie.

"First time you've been so far, isn't it? You don't get on very fast," said Miss Jackson. "What a long business it has been, to be sure! January, February, March, April, and here we are at the end of May. But you are better now really, I suppose."

"Nothing wrong, except that I cannot get back my strength. Thank you," as she squared her



".' Thank you,' as abe squared her plump arm, clothed in rustling silk and fringe, for his scoeptance." -Page 136.

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plump arm, clothed in rustling silk and fringe, for his acceptance.

"Which way are you going? To Rocklands? So am I."

"I have never been since---"

"Ah, it's a changed household now," sighed Miss Jackson.

"How is Mrs. Montgomerie?"

"Oh, she's quite down in the dumps and out of sorts, poor old lady. Spring weather, I suppose. Odd that this glorious sunshine can make anybody She has never been the same since Mrs. dumpish. Joliffe's death. Always expecting to die herself, poor dear thing, and going through imaginary farewells-not always imaginary either, for she gets Mr. and Miss Joliffe to be present, and has a rehearsal scene, and upsets everybody. And nearly every other day she makes a sort of verbal last will and testament for my edification, and preaches me a sermon about the uncertain tenure of life, and ends by a fit of horror at the thought of death and the recollection of her own unworthiness. Don't think me very wicked to talk like this, Mr. Corrie,"-and Miss Jackson actually gave a gulp. "It's the only way to take the matter. If one doesn't laugh, one must cry. If you knew how depressing the sort of thing is !-- and Mrs. Montgomerie has no mercy on other folks' feelings. One can't spend one's life looking into one's coffin; at least it isn't a cheerful occupation. And she can't stand anybody else being doleful except herself. She is such a good old lady

too-one feels she is safe if anybody is-but she can't see it so. At least I'm not sure that she really questions her own safety, but she goes through such terrors in expectation. She has a perfect horror of death, and I think it is that that she fears, not what comes after. I could understand the other better." Then, as Mr. Corrie's eyes met hers, "No. I don't mean that I should feel it so. I'm not so good as some, and I never can talk conventionally, you know, but I don't say I haven't a trust and a hope -and--- However--Dr. Ritchie came to see her to-day, and that always does her good, for the time. It's moral doctoring more than physical that she wants, and happily he knows how to give it. But the doses want constant renewing. I wish you would come too sometimes. Miss Joliffe is seldom free now, and that makes matters worse."

- "She must be very much occupied with her father."
 - "Very much. She lives for him in fact-entirely."
- "I have been told that her devotion to him and her entire self-forgetfulness are beautiful."
- "Poor little darling! Forgive me, Mr. Corrie, but you seem like one of the family almost, after having so much to do with Cleve—poor dear boy! what has become of him? And one must let out sometimes, and I know you are safe. Lady Catherine is my safety-valve commonly, but she has been so busy of late, I can't get more than a glimpse of her. Poor little Kathleen; she is the very sweetest and loveliest

girl, I do think, that I ever saw. I always thought her charming, but now she has grown to look so delicate, with that intensely sweet pensive smile of hers, she is positively—positively—there is something unearthly about her,—I believe the bodily part of her will melt away some day and leave nothing but spirit. To see those deep-blue eyes watching Mr. Joliffe's every movement,—I declare it is enough to make one cry. And yet it isn't healthy or right. Why is she to be his slave, and to have no time or care for a soul in the world beside?"

Mr. Corrie could not help smiling. "Isn't that putting it rather strongly, Miss Jackson?"

"Strong, maybe, but true," retorted Miss Jackson. "I tell you the tableau is lovely, Mr. Corrie, and Rockston stands in open-eyed admiration, and so do I. But at the same time I happen to have a few grains of common-sense in my brain. And I don't like to see the sad little faces of those two children. -and I don't quite like to think of the life Miss Breay leads, left to herself as she is, day after day. She is an odd churlish girl, not easy to grow fond of I should think, but she looks sickly, and she is a human being, and I suppose she has a heart. And Mr. Joliffe isn't the only individual in all the world who has a claim upon Miss Joliffe. There,—it's out now, and I shall be crazy with myself by and by for having said anything to you, so the kindest thing you can do is to forget my words as fast as possible. Ah, you won't find them in to-day," she added, as a

turn brought Rocklands into sight. "There's the carriage at the door, and Miss Joliffe stepping in. They are off too! Mr. Joliffe drives well, I always say that. He will stop to speak to you."

The little open carriage whirled up, and was checked. Mr. Joliffe leant forward to shake hands, asking, "How are you to-day? Were you coming to call?"

"I'll come another day. I really don't find myself quite equal to it now."

"Don't run the risk of over-exerting yourself. Would you like a lift home, if you don't mind the back seat? We are going your way."

Mr. Corrie had not the least objection to back seats, and was glad to be spared the return walk. He noted the change in Kathleen referred to by Miss Jackson. She looked very slight and even thin, in her deep mourning, with a varying soft tint on her cheek, and a look of habitual heaviness in her dark-blue eyes. The old childish manner was gone, and was replaced by a dawning of graceful self-possession, not unlike that of her mother.

Miss Jackson exchanged a few remarks, and then watched them drive off, hesitating what to do with herself. "I don't care for a talk with that girl," she thought. "But there, I'm as bad as anybody. If she is lonely and cross, all the more need to cheer the poor thing up. I'll go." And she trudged on.

Joan certainly did feel lonely that day, and other days as well.

Not that it was a new thing in her life to have to spend hours by herself; for she had done so often in her former home, before her uncle's second marriage. Things, however, had been different then. She had had her household occupations, her daily duties, her little interests. She had had her uncle to work for, and her one particular friend in the place to love. The friend had died, and her uncle had married again; and then, though the sympathy and the responsibility had been lacking, she had been neither solitary nor idle. Mrs. Breay had looked sharply after her, and had provided ample occupation; and while Joan disliked work and disliked yet more the new aunt, she was the better for employment.

Now matters were changed, and her life had settled down into a grey level of discontent and idleness. She had no occupation, no interest. Everything that she needed in the way of dress was provided for her, and even mending was taken off her hands. She did not care to work unnecessarily. Neither was Joan a person of literary tastes, though she spent a good deal of time in reading stories after a listless fashion. She had not energy of character or strength of principle to conquer fractiousness and to rise above indolence.

Half a year had not sufficed to find her even an incipient friend in Rockston. She was unattractive, and her manner repelled the most kindly-intentioned strangers; also Joan rather oddly prided herself upon her paucity of friends, and her slowness in forming attachments.

Cousinly companionship with Kathleen had become a thing almost impossible, for Kathleen was always occupied. The children would naturally have come to Joan in their sister's frequent absence; but though in certain moods she could be kind and amusing, it was always a matter of mood and inclination with her, not of principle. They rarely ventured to seek her unsummoned, never knowing whether their approaches would be courted or shunned; and Joan, counting herself disliked by them, proudly held aloof.

With Miss Thorpe she was not on happy terms. The two, however unlike in general character, were alike in self-absorption, in self-pity, in self-indulgence. Moreover, each was a little disposed to be jealous of the other's position in the household. and to weigh the amount of attention received by the other from Kathleen. Also, each criticised the other on all occasions—Joan to herself, Miss Thorpe to the children. Joan was cold-mannered. and Miss Thorpe counted her proud. Miss Thorpe was nervous, and Joan counted her fussy. Neither was far wrong in her estimate of the other; but as Miss Thorpe also was proud, and as Joan also was fussy, this afforded no uncommon instance of the merciless fashion in which man is apt to view his own particular weaknesses in another.

Joan's was, moreover, a jealous nature. She would not take pains to be the first, but she did not like to see herself second. She would not take pains to win love, but she did not like to see another more loved than herself.

She had a curious mixture of feelings about Kathleen. It was hardly possible that she should spend all these months in the house, and not come under the influence of Kathleen's lovableness. Joan did come under it, and was after a sort taken captive by it.

She admired Kathleen, and in her heart she loved her. But the admiration and the love smouldered under the surface, affording no gratification to any one, and filling Joan with a restless sense of unsatisfied longing. She saw that Kathleen's kind manner to herself was the outcome of duty. not of affection. Too proud to endeavour to win Kathleen's love by showing her own, she hid it away, yielding to passionate discontent. Why was Kathleen so fair and sweet, and she herself so plain and unattractive? Why had Kathleen so many friends, while she had none? Why was Kathleen admired by all, while she was looked upon as merely an object of compassionate kindness? Why was Kathleen a child of ease and wealth, while she had to eat the bitter bread of charity?

These things working in Joan's mind could not but result in moodiness and gloom. She was very unhappy, and no marvel. Days spent in idleness and listless self-indulgence, days in which she worked neither for God nor for fellow-man, could not but be unhappy.

She had indeed a certain kind and amount of

religion. She said her prayers regularly morning and evening, and read a portion in her Bible every day—not troubling herself very much perhaps if the sense of what she read failed to reach her understanding. She had, moreover, oftentimes her moods of restless anxiety about her own spiritual state, fits of dread as to the future, uneasy prickings and murmurings of conscience respecting her daily life. But these facts she never told, and none ever knew Joan to confess herself in the wrong. Her religion, such as it was, did not make her happy, did not shine in her life. For self and not Christ was the centre of her being; self's happiness, and not the happiness of others, was the object of her existence.

Her very affection for Kathleen grew to be of so poisoned a nature as not to be worthy of the name of love. She spoke to no one more curtly than to Kathleen. She made it harder for no one to be patient and kind to her than for Kathleen. Joan believed at length that Kathleen positively disliked her, but this was not true. Active love could scarcely spring into being under the constant friction—the yielding to irascibility on the one side, the struggle for self-command on the other. Yet Kathleen would have loved, had Joan permitted. It was Joan's will, not Kathleen's, which held the cousins apart.

CHAPTER XVI.

PLAIN SPEAKING.

"OH dear me!" sighed Joan, as she lounged ungracefully in a sofa corner, with an open book on her lap, which she was not reading.

Then she looked up to find Miss Jackson standing in her front.

Joan disliked Miss Jackson. She disliked a great many people unfortunately, having a knack of always seeing the worst instead of the best points in the characters of her acquaintances. Her hand-shake was of a chilling description. Miss Jackson sat down, not appearing to notice this. She was heated with her walk, and she loosened her bonnet-strings and fanned herself with her pocket-handkerchief. Nevertheless she managed as usual to wear an expression of lively good-humour, in strong contrast with Joan's leaden and spiritless aspect.

"You seem fatigued to-day," Miss Jackson said briskly. "Like the rest of the world, I suppose, grumbling at this lovely spring weather."

"I don't grumble," said Joan.

"That wasn't grumbling just now, was it?"

"What?" asked Joan.

Miss Jackson mimicked the deplorable intonation of Joan's yawning.—"'O dear me!'"

"I don't feel well," said Joan, offended.

"Get a good brisk walk. That would do you good."

"I can't walk. It makes my back bad."

"Dear me, that's unfortunate. You should see Dr. Ritchie about it."

Joan was silent. She had held out against doing so, as long as Kathleen had pressed the point. Since Kathleen had ceased to press, Joan had wished for nothing more strongly, and she was daily annoyed because nobody proposed it.

"Now why don't you?" asked Miss Jackson, perfectly well aware of the state of things. "I would in your place."

"Doctors don't know everything, I suppose," said

Joan snappishly.

"Ah, you're your grandmother's own grandchild!" said Miss Jackson. "Ideas run in the blood, evidently! Doctors don't know everything,—of course! And they make mistakes—of course! That's only to say they are human beings. But I suppose it is pretty clear that they know a good deal more than you and I do."

"It isn't worth while," said Joan, going on a fresh tack.

Miss Jackson adhered to her own. "Don't they?" she asked. "And I suppose, if it's a question which is most likely to be mistaken about your health, you or Dr. Ritchie——"

"It doesn't matter to anybody what I feel," said Joan. "Kathleen doesn't care."

"Has Miss Joliffe never proposed your seeing Dr. Ritchie? Now I am surprised," said Miss Jackson, with an air of astonishment, and eyes opened wider than even their wont. "I shouldn't really have expected such thoughtlessness on her part. But perhaps you never allow her to know when you are ill. That would be kind and thoughtful of you, now she has so much weighing on her,—still, self-forgetfulness may go too far. I will suggest to Miss Joliffe—"

Joan writhed under the satire, which yet she could not absolutely say was satire and not simplicity, so beaming was Miss Jackson's expression of good-nature.

- "I don't want-" she broke in.
- "Don't want to consult Dr. Ritchie? Oh, then you really think there is not much wrong with you. Just a little nervous weakness, perhaps."
 - "Nervous!" repeated Joan indignantly.
- "Why, everybody suffers from nerves nowadays," said Miss Jackson. "So long as you don't let your nerves get the upper hand of you, there's no need to be ashamed."
- "It isn't nerves. I had a fall two years ago," said Joan.
- "All the more need to have it seen to," responded Miss Jackson. "Falls are bad matters sometimes. You ought to be on a regular plan,—so much walking and so much lying down."

- "I don't like to be tied to rules."
- "No, of course not,—much pleasanter to do as one fancies. I've no doubt you like best to lounge about and do nothing all day. But it is a shocking habit. You ought to take a rest and then be busy, and then rest again and then be busy again. If you feel ever so uncomfortable, you'll be twice as happy if you do something for somebody else, and forget the feelings."
 - "One can't forget," Joan said.
- "Not altogether, perhaps,—but the thought of yourself can be put into the background instead of the foreground. Anything rather than spend your day in mumping and growling," said Miss Jackson, with a pat of Joan's hand.
- "I can't go about like other people," said Joan, rather injured. "It isn't as if I were strong like Kathleen."
 - "Do you think Miss Joliffe so very strong?"
 - "She never seems tired."
- "She does a good deal, no doubt," said Miss Jackson reflectively. "But—never tired! My dear, if you had a quarter of the cares resting on you, which are weighing on those young shoulders, you would know what tiredness means."

Joan's lip curled contemptuously.

"Now I wouldn't, Miss Breay. You are not really bad-looking, you know—but if you could see how that spoils you——"

The curl was replaced by an expression of anger. Miss Jackson went on, unheeding it:—

- "Of course you will think I have no business to speak, and I suppose I have not; but when I look at you two girls, I really am sorry. Why can't you be more of a help to one another?"
- "Kathleen does not care for me," said Joan shortly.
- "Perhaps you are mistaken. She is so sweet and gentle."
 - "Not to me."
 - "Not gentle!"
- "Oh, well, she is kind, I suppose, because she thinks she ought. That is all."
 - "I wonder if you give her a chance of feeling anything else. It isn't easy to be affectionate, in the face of splashes of cold water."
 - "Kathleen is perfect, of course; everybody knows that," said Joan. "I'm tired of the talk about her. It's easy to be sweet and humble when all the world lies at her feet."
 - "Would all the world lie at her feet if she wasn't sweet and humble?" asked Miss Jackson.

Joan was silent.

- "And if Miss Breay were sweet and humble too, would not somebody lie at her feet, perhaps?"
- "Oh, I don't want that," said Joan scornfully.

 "I can stand alone. I can't seem different from what I am. If people like me, they must like me as they find me."
- "Precisely so—or dislike you in the same manner."

Miss Jackson moved her chair a pace nearer.

"Now it's as plain as daylight," she said. "There's no denying it, Miss Breay. You are not contented, and you are not happy, and you are jealous of your cousin, and you would like to have friends, and you are too proud to make them. I am a bold woman to speak so plainly, but it is my way."

CHAPTER XVIL

RATHER SUDDEN.

JOAN fixed her eyes on the ground and made no sign. Miss Jackson quitted her chair with a brisk movement, sat down on the sofa, and laid a plump hand on Joan's limp fingers.

"It's a pity," she said. "It's a great pity. You might be such a nice pleasant girl, and you just take pains to make yourself disagreeable. And you might have love and kindness from everybody about you; and you just hold them all off at arm's length. And what on earth do you gain by it? I wouldn't give way to the temptation,—I wouldn't really, Miss Breay. You would be fifty times happier if you didn't. It isn't right, you know. Now is it?"

Joan would not speak. Miss Jackson looked her smilingly in the face, and repeated—

"Now is it? Tell me—is it right? Do you think it is right? Do you make yourself or anybody else happier by it?"

And Joan muttered, "No, but I can't help it."

"O yes, you can. Everybody can help it. Why even a heathen can learn self-control, and you won't tell me you are worse than a heathen, I suppose,

—you, with a Bible!" added Miss Jackson. "I have no patience with people who read their Bibles every day, and talk all the while about 'can't' do this and 'can't' do that. Can't means won't. It means that they will have their own way, at any cost. We do dearly like to have our own way, all of us, and that's a fact. Now you needn't expect a sermon from me, for I'm not going to give you one. It isn't my way. Only you know there is a verse in the Bible which begins,—'I can do all things,'—just the opposite to your 'can't;' and you know how it goes on." Then, with a sudden swerve to a new subject. "Do tell me, Miss Breay, who is your very dearest friend in all the world?"

- "I haven't any."
- "No friend!"
- "I had one, and she died."
- "What was her name?"
- "Nannie Pearce. She was the daughter of the station-master," said Joan, with a combative expression. "I suppose nobody here would condescend to look at her. That is part of Kathleen's humility, I suppose."
 - "Not a lady, eh?"
- "I don't know. I dare say not. I don't care. She was my friend. I loved her more than all the rest of the world put together," said Joan, with impatient tears. "But I spoke of her once to Kathleen—and if you had seen Kathleen open her eyes."
 - "She didn't say anything unkind, did she?"

"O no, of course not; it isn't her way. She only looked. Oh, I knew well enough. I made up my mind never to speak of Nannie to Kathleen again. I suppose Nannie was not a lady by birth—of course. She was only good and sweet and loving."

"That's a good deal," said Miss Jackson. "If she had not been so, she would not have had you at her feet, I daresay."

"Kathleen would not have cared for her."

"Very likely not. Everybody doesn't suit everybody alike. Your cousin has been trained differently from you, and she is used to high-bred manners. Who is your next friend?"

"I haven't anv."

"None? You poor thing!" said Miss Jackson.

"Now I couldn't stand that—I really couldn't. I am thankful to say I have plenty of friends. Of course I have taken pains to make them, for I always knew I wasn't a beauty or a wit, and could not expect to have them without a little trouble on my part. Not that anybody can, for the matter of that—not even Miss Joliffe or Lady Catherine. Miss Joliffe's prettiness and Lady Catherine's title may gain them acquaintances, but something more is needed for the making of real friends—something which you have at command as well as they. Now you take my advice, and don't rest till you have a real true loving-hearted friend of your own."

"There isn't anybody in Rockston."

"Not a single person in all Rockston good enough for you? You must be above all ordinary mortals. You will have to turn to me," said Miss Jackson jokingly.

Joan looked up with unwonted softness of expression, and said—

"I wish I might."

"Do what? Turn to me?"

"I wish you would be my friend."

"How much older than yourself do you suppose I am?"

"That doesn't matter. Lady Catherine is Kathleen's friend."

"Well—yes; but you would never put up with me. I'm the plainest-spoken of individuals. I should give you mortal offence in less than a week."

"O no; I should like it," said Joan. "I could love you."

Whether or no Miss Jackson could return the compliment, she bestowed upon Joan a hearty kiss.

"Then it is a compact between us. There—that seals it. But I warn you, I shall take you in hand, lecture you, and say all sorts of hard things—'mother' you, in fact."

"I don't remember my mother," replied Joan. "I will try to do all you tell me. Please call me Joan."

"We're getting on apace," thought Miss Jackson, recalling Joan's many expressions of contempt for rapidly-formed friendships. Aloud she observed, "Thank you, my dear, but I am not sure if that will do. Better not be in a hurry. The family might not like it,"

"I don't care about 'the family.' I am not one of them."

"You owe respect to Mr. Joliffe's wishes. Remember I am only your grandmamma's companion. I can't take any step likely to bring trouble. We must have his leave before I leave off calling you Miss Breay. You see I don't mean to give in to your wishes on all occasions."

"I don't mind-from you," Joan said again.

Hearts are singularly won sometimes, and inexplicably. A good many things are inexplicable in these curious human hearts of ours.

From that day forth Joan was transformed into the devoted admirer of Miss Jackson - a very unattractive person to the world in general, not refined, not over lady-like, not intellectual, not good-looking. What of all that? Rounded features. brick-dust complexion, wide-open eyes, loud laugh, blunt liveliness, all these were nothing to Joan. Affection threw a transforming veil over the whole. As for Miss Jackson's sterling nature, true as gold, uncompromising as steel, self-denying, and full of hearty kindness, with its vein of keen humour, its sharp eye to others' good and bad points, its substratum of tenderness, Joan knew nothing of all this, beyond having a general sense of something true and kind, and a particular sense that Miss Jackson "suited" her. More she could not explain. · only knew her heart was taken captive.

A new element had come into Joan's life. The

love once poured upon Nannie Pearce, and pent up since in her own heart, had found an outlet, and a very singular one, some thought. Of all people to be the chosen friend of the moody and easily-offended Joan, the blunt and impulsive, goodhumoured yet semi-satirical Miss Jackson might have been counted the most improbable. But hearts do not act by rules or after expectations.

It was a necessity of Joan's nature, as it is more or less a necessity of every one's nature, that she should have somebody to love. It was a peculiarity of Joan's nature that, having one object of affection, she was therewith satisfied, and did not care for a second. This was undesirable and unhealthy, and its source lay in a selfish tone of mind. Joan wanted a friend for herself, because she could not be happy without one; she did not wish to be a friend to others that she might make others happy.

Miss Jackson was at first merely sorry for Joan, and interested in her because sorry for her. Love, however, commonly begets love, and in no long time Miss Jackson could give an honest return for the affection poured upon herself, differing perhaps in quality and in quantity. She laughingly declared it to be the only time in her life that she had ever had "a real admirer."

The first time that Joan actually exerted herself to walk off alone and visit Mrs. Montgomerie was an occasion of wonderment to the household, which wonder grew on a speedy repetition of the visit. It did not dawn upon Kathleen that Miss Jackson, and not Mrs. Montgomerie, was the real object of these visits, till she observed that an hour was chosen when Mrs. Montgomerie would be invisible.

Kathleen was at first regretful. Joan's manners were already lacking in the refined finish which suited her father's fastidious taste; and she feared that Miss Jackson's high-pitched voice and indifference to small rules of etiquette might tend to increase the evil.

She needed not to have feared. If Miss Jackson had not refinement of manner, she had observation and she had tact. She knew Mr. Joliffe, understood the "rubs" of the Rocklands household, and was well acquainted with his requirements in a lady. Those small hints as to bearing and deportment, which Kathleen could not venture to utter, Miss Jackson could bestow without hesitation. Joan received reproofs and suggestions with edifying meekness, and set herself to repair what was wrong, —for Miss Jackson's sake.

That was the key-note to the whole. What she did, was done to win Miss Jackson's approval. "Anything to please Miss Jackson" was the order of events that summer.

Joan soared no higher. The state of things was an improvement, outwardly, but it contained some comic and some sad elements. None laughed more heartily at the former than Miss Jackson, and possibly none felt the latter more sincerely. She would have liked to see the sense of right and the sense of duty governing Joan's life, in place of this frantic

devotion to herself. For after all, Joan was feeding upon husks. She was staking her happiness upon an earthly venture, and was setting up an earthly idol. She was trying to meet her soul-cravings with bread that could not satisfy. There was no peace of heart in this friendship, for it filled the wrong place with her. If she could see Miss Jackson, she was happy. If she could not see Miss Jackson, she was miserable. She had found a pivot upon which to turn, but it was an earthly pivot, insufficient for the purpose. and the machinery of her being jarred and creaked in consequence. She was not a much pleasanter inmate in her present mood than she had been in the gloomy state preceding. "Joan's ups and downs," as the children called them, became a fruitful source of worry to Mr. Joliffe, and therefore to Kathleen.

One of Miss Jackson's first uses of her new power was to bring about the long-talked of examination into Joan's health. Joan submitted to Miss Jackson's mandate, and Dr. Ritchie came.

His opinion proved encouraging. He did not think there was much amiss. Joan was put through a course of treatment for her general health, ordered to lie down during certain hours and to walk certain distances, encouraged to exert herself and to be busy within moderate bounds, and desired by no means to look upon herself as an invalid. Joan did not take offence—only because Miss Jackson assented to and enforced the same.

"Rather a change!" Dr. Ritchie said to Kathleen, with amused eyes. "How does it affect you?"

"I think it is better," Kathleen said. "But I wish Joan could take things more quietly. Papa doesn't care to see Miss Jackson perpetually in and out."

"And Joan is not happy without a succession of interviews?"

"No, that is just it. Miss Jackson is very good and nice, of course, but she has a loud voice—and papa"— Dr. Ritchie made a gesture of comprehension—"it makes papa depressed, and then he always begins to think about the past. Yet if Miss Jackson does not come, Joan wants to be always going to her, and grandmamma objects to that."

"Rather difficult for you to know what line to take."

"Yes, I can't always see my way. I am trying to be patient, Dr. Ritchie."

"I see you are," he said gravely.

"I suppose, if nobody was ever a trouble, one would have no chance of learning patience," Kathleen said.

"Is your cousin your chief trouble in that respect?"

"I think so—yes. Of course there are others," said Kathleen vaguely. "But some people rasp one more than another, and Joan and I do not quite suit. Perhaps that is the very reason why we are put together."

"That each may file down the other's roughness?"

"Yes," she said quickly, "I think I mean just that. But I don't want to act as Joan's file," and

they both smiled. "I am afraid she is that to me. It is a little hard to bear sometimes, though I am sure she doesn't mean to try anybody."

"I think you would find it less trying if you had a fortnight's change," said Dr. Ritchie gently. "I shall advise Mr. Joliffe——"

But Kathleen looked frightened. "O no, no, please," she said hurriedly. "He could not spare me, and indeed I could not leave him, and he does not want to be away from home just now. I shall do very well. One cannot expect to have things perfectly smooth. Joan is much happier than she was, and that is all that matters."

Dr. Ritchie did not think so. He let the matter rest for a while, however.

One event of moment took place early that summer. The post brought a letter from America addressed to "Mrs. Joliffe," and written in a childish hand. It was as follows:

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—I don't know what you will have thought of me, you, and Leena, and all—and I am afraid you have been awfully unhappy. But I could not write before. I would have, if I could. I am only writing now on the sly, and I mustn't let them know, but I think I can manage. O mother, darling, it was so dreadful. I would give all the rest of my life to know that Mr. Corrie didn't die. But they thought he was killed, and so did I, though sometimes I do hope he wasn't really.

Fred says it was I fired that shot, but I do not know how he can be sure, because he and I fired together. I wish I hadn't done it. I wish I had never gone with them. I wish I had been different. Do please forgive me, all of you. I am very unhappy. They say we cannot go back, because if Mr. Corrie died we should be punished, and John tries to frighten But if they would let me, I would go home. Sometimes I feel as if I must see you all again. dare not tell you any more about ourselves yet, but when I can, I shall. Don't let old Mr. Hopkinson know that I have written please, please. And please don't think John and Fred are unkind to me generally, because they are not, only I do long for home, and I am so unhappy about Mr. Corrie. so good. Oh, I wish I had been different. prayed to God to forgive me, and I think He will. don't you think so? I would be different now, if I were at home. Love to all.—Your own boy

"CLEVE."

Kathleen had not for months wept so passionately as over this sorrowful little childish epistle. Not even the fear of distressing her father could restrain her. It seemed to bring back the old days, to intensify tenfold the longing for Cleve and the overwhelming desire for her mother. Yet how that mother would have grieved at the thought of her boy's position, at the impossibility of reaching him!

Joan stood outside all this, and she was so much absorbed in her own interests as to take little note of it. Not so the two younger sisters. The coming of the letter seemed to draw them and Kathleen closer together, and some passing childish expressions woke up Kathleen to the fact that she had neglected them. "It used to be so different when sweet mamma was here," Olave said wistfully. "And you weren't so busy then, Leena darling, and you could talk to us sometimes. Joan is so often cross, and Miss Thorpe is always nervous. If only papa didn't want you quite all day long!" and Justinia chimed in with a repetition of the same.

It set off Kathleen upon heart-searching and life-examining. She saw her mistake, and determined to repair it in the future. Thenceforth she took care that the lives of the children should be brighter, though with no diminution of devotion on her part to her father's comfort, and consequently with increase of strain to herself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHICH PATH?

SUMMER and winter passed away, and another summer followed in their train.

One year and nearly eight months since Mrs. Joliffe's death. Kathleen could have believed the time to be thrice as long. Sometimes she felt as if she had lived through a quarter of a century in that space.

In herself she was much changed from the fresh fair maiden of two years earlier. She had grown into a slender fragile girl, with thin cheeks, and large wistful eyes of Mediterranean-blue. Her soft sweet self-possession of manner was much admired.

Kathleen wore deep mourning still, or rather again, since that for her mother had been in some degree lightened. The heavy crape trimmings spoke of recent loss, not indeed of one in the house, yet of one very near.

For Mrs. Montgomerie was gone to her rest. Poor little anxious unhappy old lady! The change must indeed have been "rest" to her.

She had spent her life in bondage to the fear of death. Not, as Miss Jackson truly said, so much in

fear of that which should come after death as of death itself. She was oppressed with a nameless horror and dread at the thought of grappling with the last enemy. Like many other people, she could, with some confidence, leave the care of her spirit to her Saviour, but could by no means leave to Him the care of her body also.

So each time a trifling illness came, she was fretted and tortured with fears of possibilities, and knew no peace until she found herself well again.

But when the day at length drew near, when the last enemy was in very deed permitted to seize upon her, then there was a change. Then repose and calmness reigned. "How strange it is—I have no fear," she said again and again to those about her. "Isn't it wonderful? such a nervous person as I am! It doesn't seem as if I could be afraid." And Kathleen's answer, "Dear grannie, it is Jesus keeping you," explained the whole. For she had of old ever met the prospect of death in her own weakness, and now she was meeting the presence of death in her Master's strength.

One fear only she had, and that was that the fear-lessness must surely leave her. Something of a struggle before the close she must surely endure. True to herself, up to the last she could not entirely rest. But He who upheld her knew her weakness, and would not put her to a test too great for her little strength. She was borne peacefully through the flood, smiling and saying, "I never thought death could be like this." And quietly thus she entered

upon the other life, leaving behind for ever all her falterings and fears and frettings and nervous heart-sinkings.

So her Master did not fail her, and at the last she learnt to trust Him, quietly, like a little child. But why had she not trusted Him all through life? He who could bear her thus sweetly through the strong flood of the river of death, could surely have borne her in like manner, without stumbles or bruises, through the lesser streams and torrents of life. Only she had not permitted Him. But something of regret weighed upon her towards the close, and she said sadly to her son, "I wish I had trusted Him more, Albert, I wish I had trusted Him more; I think I have not honoured Christ."

And Mr. Joliffe went home and told Kathleen, as he told her everything. "I am afraid it is true," he said. "Poor dear! she has suffered sorely from a habit of expecting evil through life." But he did not take a lesson from what he saw. He went on still in his own fashion, worried with very small matters, and expectant of many small ills, at every step in his pathway.

Kathleen's sorrow at her grandmother's death was mingled with a sense of calm, at the thought of that unquiet spirit having passed beyond unquietness. She grieved and was glad together.

Something else weighed upon her through those days, more heavily perhaps than she or any one knew.

Mr. Marshall Corrie was no longer in Rockston,

or in England, and Kathleen had had a hand in his going. She felt that she had been right, felt that she could not act otherwise, if the test should come over again. And yet—and yet—

He had remained in Rockston a year and a quarter after Mrs. Joliffe's death, assisting Dr. Baring. His health was fairly re-established, though he was by no means the man that he had once been. He was much in and out of Rocklands, always a welcome guest. Mr. Joliffe liked him and encouraged his visits. Mr. Joliffe seldom saw what lay before his eyes, and the idea never occurred to him that something might come of it.

Something did come of it, for Kathleen grew to be very dear to Marshall Corrie, grew to be more to him than all the world besides. Mr. Joliffe did not see; Joan, absorbed in Miss Jackson, did not see; Miss Thorpe, absorbed in herself, did not see. But Dr. Ritchie and Lady Catherine and Miss Jackson saw, and they rejoiced for Kathleen's sake.

Kathleen had grown to be Mr. Corrie's all-in-all of earthly things; but he did not at all know what he was to Kathleen. She was so gentle and court-eous, so apt to light up in conversation, and with all her frankness, she had so much self-command, that it was very difficult to judge of her feelings. He saw that her father was ever her first thought, her first consideration. Yet he had some hope. She was very easy and cordial with him, and always seemed pleased to see him enter. Farther than this he had no certainty.

The matter might have continued longer in this doubtful stage, but a crisis came. Mr. Corrie had an offer of work in Australia with good remuneration, from a clerical relative living there. He thought the matter over, and consulted Dr. Ritchie, making no reference to Kathleen. Dr. Ritchie wondered silently, but gave his honest verdict that the seavoyage and thorough change would be beneficial to Marshall Corrie's health. "Even if you do not stay more than a year or two," he could not help adding, "it will do you good."

If I go at all I am likely to stay longer than a year or two," Corrie responded, and the Doctor saw more clearly.

That same afternoon Mr. Corrie called at Rocklands, and asked for Mr. Joliffe. He was too strictly honourable to say a word to Kathleen, without first obtaining her father's leave. It certainly was no part of his plan to depute Mr. Joliffe to speak for him. But Mr. Joliffe never kept anything from Kathleen, and when, after a brief interview, Mr. Corrie went away, he came straight to the study where he had left Kathleen writing letters for him. He always turned to her in every perplexity,—why not in this?

She saw in a moment that he was troubled. He had an uneasy way of drooping his head and moving his eyebrows, and his eyes wandered about the room with an unhappy expression, as he sat down, and sighed heavily.

"Leena, my darling," he said, and she came to him, with a touch of alarm. "I have something to

say to you. Mr. Corrie has just been here,—he has been speaking to me."

Kathleen's heart fluttered and paused and then beat wildly, and a wave of cold faintness swept over her, but she smiled in Mr. Joliffe's face, and he did not see her paleness.

"Yes, papa," she said.

"About you, my darling. It came upon me quite with a blow. I never dreamt of such a thing,—never thought it possible. I told him I was sure it was a mistake—that it would not be possible, I mean—but of course I do not know. He said you had not given him direct encouragement, still he had hopes, and he wished my leave to address you." Then with an almost childish look of distress, Mr. Joliffe took Kathleen's two little cold hands into his big trembling ones, and asked beseechingly, "My darling, could you—do you wish it? Of course," with a tardy sense of fatherly duty, "if it is for your happiness I would not say no, my Leena; my happiness is a secondary consideration."

Kathleen saw his face, and heard his words, but not so vividly as she saw at that moment her mother's dying face, heard in that moment her mother's dying words: "Leena, my child, you will be dear papa's comfort, you will take care of him!" The charge seemed to ring through the room, with a strange and solemn clearness. Kathleen could hardly believe at the moment that it was only her own excited recollection, that her mother was not actually present, was not actually speaking.

"Papa, dear, I could not leave you," she said calmly.

"And you do not care for Mr. Corrie—in that way, I mean? Of course he is a most estimable young man. But you have not that feeling for him, my darling?"

Kathleen did not know at the moment whether she had or not. She had gone on so quietly, poor child, never realising the actual posture of affairs, only, very busy, and, as a rule, very happy, and sometimes perhaps disposed to wonder how she could be quite so happy without her mother. Now a sudden revelation had come, and she was tempesttossed. She would not look to right or left. She knew there was a tempting brightness down one path which might not be trodden. She would not turn her eyes thither. The cry of her heart was that she might be kept to her duty. Just before her seemed to lie the right and only path, pointed out by her mother's dying words. She could not, might not, would not, forsake her father. was all the rest of the world to her, compared with him? But the struggle, if brief, was fierce; and as her resolution was formed, and as thought after thought flashed through her brain, the throbs of her heart grew stronger, till they seemed to vibrate through every nerve and fibre of her body. Even Mr. Joliffe saw the change in her face.

"My dear, you are not quite well," he said.

"Not quite to-day," Kathleen answered, with some difficulty. "I think you had better tell Mr.

Corrie that it cannot be. Tell him please,—very kindly "—— and her lips quivered.

"You are quite sure, my darling? You have no wish that way? Don't let your old father be selfish," said Mr. Joliffe tenderly.

"You don't want me to leave you?" she whispered.

"My sweet one,—it would break my heart. I think it would kill me, Leena."

That clenched the business, if clenching were needed. Kathleen clung to him for support, panting.

"This has quite agitated you," he said—"and I do not wonder. It agitated me, and made me feel positively ill. I had never dreamt of such a thing as losing my little Leena. Life would indeed be desolate."

"Will you tell him, dear papa,—or shall I?" asked Kathleen softly.

"I think perhaps I had better," Mr. Joliffe said, contrary to his usual habit of putting off disagreeable duties upon others. He had possibly an instinctive fear of Mr. Corrie's personal influence; also he was dimly conscious that Mr. Corrie had not exactly meant him to speak to Kathleen, and that it might be a little awkward for Kathleen to come forward. "I will go at once to his lodgings and try to find him. Better put the poor man out of suspense."

Mr. Joliffe took his hat, and started immediately, impatient to have the matter settled; and Kathleen

spent the time of his absence in a long tumult of troubled thought.

She was very inexperienced in such matters, and did not at all know what might be the next step. Would Mr. Corrie wish to see her? Somehow she thought this not unlikely, and her heart leapt at the thought of a few words of explanation-just that he might understand the true state of affairs. Yet would it not be kinder not to explain, and thus to leave him perfectly free? How could she ask him to wait? She would never be able to leave her father. Would Mr. Corrie wait half a lifetime for her? Nay. could she wish him to do so, even if he were willing? These and a hundred other questions tortured the poor child during her father's absence, resolving themselves into a passionate longing for her mother. "Mamma would know, mamma would tell me what is right," she thought. Then she began almost to wish that she had not quite so hastily decided—that she had taken time for consideration. But if she had—what then? Could she leave her father? no, impossible. Things were no doubt best as they were. Only perhaps—it might be not quite at an end yet. And at this stage, Mr. Joliffe's steps were heard returning, and Kathleen stood up to meet him.

"Poor fellow, I was very sorry for him," Mr. Joliffe said pityingly. "I told him as kindly as I could, my darling, knowing you would wish me to do so. He asked me if I could give him any hope at all for the future, and I said of course that I could not feel justified in doing so. He seemed a good deal

upset, but really he took it very nicely on the whole, and said he was not worthy of you, and so on. He said this would decide him to go to Australia."

Kathleen put her hand to her forehead. "Australia?" she faltered.

"Yes, he has had an offer of a curacy out there—
or a living, I am not sure which. I do not know
particulars." Mr. Joliffe sat down with a relieved
air, as if the business were satisfactorily disposed of.
It was not his habit to keep anything from Kathleen; still, he did not find it necessary on this occasion to enter into details of the young man's distress,
or to inform her how earnestly Mr. Corrie had pressed
for a personal interview, and how decisively he had
himself declined it for her. He had not intended to
say a single word beyond what he was authorised to
say; but certainly Kathleen could not have truthfully
described her own feelings as he had described them.

"Papa—he did not seem very sorry?"

"He was disappointed, of course—how could it be otherwise? But when he gets into a new country, among fresh scenes and fresh faces, he will no doubt soon get over it. I fancy he will leave Rockston quickly."

Kathleen kissed her father's forehead, said gently, "I will come back soon," and went to her own room. Hardwicke found her there on her bed somewhat later, in a half-fainting condition. No one heard of this, for Kathleen insisted on silence. Hardwicke did not know the reason. She only knew that Kathleen was not afterwards the same in spirits that she had been before.

The illness and death of Mrs. Montgomerie, following immediately after, took up much of Kathleen's time, and afforded an excuse for her pale looks. She did not see Mr. Corrie again. For a few days she was haunted by vague hopes of a possible encounter, and then she heard that Marshall Corrie was gone.

No one spoke of him to Kathleen, though many wondered at the posture of affairs. But Mr. Corrie had confided his trouble to none, not even to Lady Catherine; and not even to Lady Catherine could Kathleen speak of hers. The subject was tacitly avoided between them. Intimate as Lady Catherine was with Kathleen, she was far too delicate to ask questions uninvited, or to attempt to lift the veil which Kathleen had drawn.

Joan had her trouble, alongside of other people's troubles, and doubtless she considered it to be one unsurpassed in kind. The source of her woe was neither more nor less than Miss Jackson's departure from Rockston.

For a while after Mrs. Montgomerie's death, Miss Jackson remained at Rocklands. Mr. Joliffe was grateful to her for her care of his mother-in-law, and though he did not like her personally, he yielded immediately to Kathleen's suggestion that she should be asked to the house for a few weeks, during which she might look out for other work in the place. But none presented itself. Joan passed through various stages of hope and despair, settling down finally

into the latter, when work in Rockston failed to appear, and a situation in London was accepted.

The despair remained in abeyance, so long as Miss Jackson was in the house. But no sooner did Miss Jackson take her departure, than Joan went down to zero.

Nothing was right with her thenceforward. She would not go out, would not exert herself, would not work, would not read, would not take interest in aught around her. The touchstone had been applied, and the result showed that the change in her had not been genuine, that the improvement had been superficial, that the motive had been faulty.

"For Miss Jackson's sake," had swayed her so long as she could enjoy Miss Jackson's company, and rejoice in Miss Jackson's approval. That failing, no higher motive remained to bend her will.

Whatever was the precise nature of her affection, however, Joan contrived to make herself very unhappy. She fretted and pined and yielded to gloom, till there was some foundation for Mr. Joliffe's frequent complaint to Kathleen, "That girl grows perfectly unbearable." Curiously enough, a good many people who connected naturally Kathleen's pale looks with her grandmother's death, connected Joan's moody looks with Mr Corrie's departure. Perhaps the mistake was not surprising. Kathleen always had a smile at command, and Joan had none.

"My dear," Mr. Joliffe said one day to Kathleen, early in September, "Dr. Ritchie has been speaking

to me about you, and he has quite frightened me, he has indeed, darling."

This of course was the last thing that Dr. Ritchie had intended Mr. Joliffe to say to Kathleen.

"I don't think there is any need," Kathleen answered gently, while a sudden wonder flashed through her mind—was she going, as her mother had gone? The thought was almost a wish for the moment—a longing for rest, if God so willed. But what could her father do without her? And then she remembered Marshall Corrie,—and sighed.

"No, so I told him, Leena. Indeed, I have always counted yours a strong constitution, not like your dear mother's. But he says you have been overtaxed, and he wants me to take care of you. He said, by the bye, that I was not to repeat his words, but I know my Leena is not one of the nervous sort, easily frightened. You will take care of yourself, my child, for your father's sake."

"O yes," Kathleen answered, smiling.

"I told him I had some thoughts of taking you abroad for a few weeks. The idea occurred to me only yesterday, and I meant to propose it this morning. You have never been out of England, and I think a run on the Continent would freshen you up. What do you say, my dear? Dr. Ritchie urges it strongly."

Kathleen looked pleased, as she was expected to do. "It would be delightful," she said. "And, papa, may Joan come too?"

"Joan! My dear, she will spoil everything with her moods."

"No, I think it would do her good. She is so depressed about losing Miss Jackson, and she really is not looking well."

"Not likely, when she yields to these tempers."

"But perhaps if she were better she would be less easily vexed. Of course it must be as you like, dear papa, only I think the treat would be nice for Joan."

"You shall have it all your own way, my darling," said Mr. Joliffe, kissing her. "Only don't you be ill. I think that if Joan goes, we must take Hardwicke. I can't have you tied down at hotels, looking after your cousin. You must be free to go about with me."

"Where shall we go first, papa?"

"Where would you like, Leena? I had some thoughts of Lucerne, and perhaps across thence into Italy."

And Kathleen had as usual to plan and arrange the whole.

CHAPTER XIX.

LAKE AND MOUNTAIN.

THE travellers reached Lucerne, after a rapid run through Holland, Belgium, and Germany, taking Antwerp and Brussels, Cologne and Coblentz, with divers other places of more or less note, upon their way.

Once fairly started on a course of sight-seeing, Mr. Joliffe could do nothing by halves. It never occurred to him that to undertake too much within a given space of time must result in confused recollections. He had no notion of discrimination in choice. He was unhappy if a single cathedral or church within reach remained unvisited, if a single castle or ruin remained unexplored.

Moreover, he counted it a necessity that Kathleen should accompany him wherever he went. He was quite content to leave Joan behind, under Hardwicke's charge, when she confessed to fatigue. Kathleen never did confess to it, unless questioned, and he was so imbued with the idea that "change" was all she needed, and so set upon seeing and doing all that the handbooks recommended, as rarely to think of questioning her.

So they spent their days in the most approved tourist fashion, hurrying from churches to public buildings, rushing from gardens to water-falls, skimming through picture-galleries and museums, glancing at everything, and becoming acquainted with nothing. Mr. Joliffe at home was a quiet individual, somewhat slow in movement, greatly given to studying his own physical condition, and habitually in fear of over-fatigue. Mr. Joliffe on a continental tour was another man, up to anything, ready for unlimited exertions, apparently independent of food and sleep.

One night had been spent at Bäle, and thence they had come by rail straight to Lucerne, arriving in time for luncheon on Saturday.

"It is a splendid afternoon. We should not lose it," Mr. Joliffe said, with what was for him an eager manner. "What do you say to a walk up Le Petit Rigi, Leena? No great distance, I am told. Joan will hardly manage it."

"No," Joan said bluntly. She had not very keen perceptions, but she must have been dense indeed, not to have been aware by this time that Mr. Joliffe preferred her absence to her presence. "You had better take Kathleen, and leave me with Hardwicke. You will like that best."

Mr. Joliffe looked mildly astonished. Of course he had the feeling, but he was amazed at any one guessing it. "I merely imagined, Joan, that it might be farther than you cared to walk," he said politely.

"Oh, I can walk farther here than at home," said Joan. "But it does not matter. I can go and look at the lake with Hardwicke."

"I don't really think it will be too long a walk for Joan," said Kathleen, rousing herself from a dream. "I don't think I can go very far to-day."

"You are not tired, darling?" asked her father.

"A little," Kathleen admitted. "But we need not hurry, and I want to see the views."

"Yes, and the fresh air will do you good. Railway travelling seems to knock you up, rather. We must try what mountain-climbing will do. I am quite astonished at myself. The change of scene makes me feel a positive elasticity. My dear, will you enquire the road to Le Petit Rigi?"

Kathleen obeyed, and they speedily set off. It was a longer walk than the girls had anticipated, and Mr. Joliffe seemed in no haste to shorten it. Kathleen toiled patiently upwards, too weary to enjoy herself. Joan found the ramble delightful. Travelling was new to her, and she, like Mr. Joliffe, was a different creature abroad from what she was at home. Moreover, this was her first sight of mountains, with the exception only of distant peeps from the train, on the previous day, of the Bernese Oberland, like a far-off fairy-scene of delicate snow-peaks, glistening high up in the blue sky.

The present scene excited her, and drew away her thoughts from the tiny circle of her own life with its central figure of self. She brightened up, and was so agreeable that Mr. Joliffe positively found

himself talking to her, showing her points in the scenery worth noting, and enjoying her delight. They had grand views of the blue lake, with its surrounding amphitheatre of mountains, the broad Rigi range to the left, stern Mount Pilatus to the right, and all the wide sweep of jagged peaks and heights between, beyond the water, while below lay the town of Lucerne with its hotels and gardens.

None of the three knew how time passed except Kathleen, and she made no protest. Twilight was near when they came, after their ramble, within easy distance of the hotel. Joan drew attention to a side path, with a notice on a board, "To the 'Three Lindens,'" she said. "That must be a good view-place. Look, it would not take us many minutes to get up. Can't we go?"

"Shall we, my dear?" Mr. Joliffe asked of Kathleen, and as a matter of course she smiled and said, "O yes," and toiled up again. She was glad to reach the seat under the lime-trees.

Others had arrived before them. Two ladies sat at the farther end of the same seat, side by side. One was young, with mourning dress and widow's cap, and soft pale outline. The other was older, a fine-looking woman, between forty and fifty, well dressed in black and grey. Her clear blue eyes took note of the new arrivals. She had not quite the appearance of a lady by birth, yet she was particularly pleasing, with handsome features and smooth calm brow.

Joan had for a moment a bewildered feeling that

surely the face was familiar. Then she turned her attention to the view.

They were in for a splendid sunset, well worth the extra climb, Mr. Joliffe said, and he applauded Joan's advice. But they soon left off talking; voices seemed discordant in the scene.

For the mountain amphitheatre lay before them still, surrounding a lake of deep purple, but themselves glowing in every imaginable hue of sunset beauty. Rugged Mount Pilatus, in his solitary grandeur, wore an indescribable tint of rich roselilac, with varied shades of purple and gold filling the air around. As the sun sank, the water grew darker, and shadows crept up the mountain-sides, though the peaks still shone in rosy light, and white snow-patches upon the summits were steeped One distant snow-field in particular claimed attention, and as the lights died out from peak after peak successively, this square white mass kept its red glow longer than any other. But at length even it faded, and a weird world of solemn grey mountains lay around, while Jupiter shone in soft brilliance over one far-off edge.

"I could not have fancied anything like it," breathed Joan.

"And one never could grow weary of it," the elder stranger said. "It's a wonderful wonderful world."

"It is, indeed," said Mr. Joliffe, while Joan had again the puzzled sense of familiarity. Surely those full and high yet musical tones were not unknown to her.

"It's the more wonderful that any man can stand looking upon such a sight, and not hear God's voice speaking to him out of it," said the other. "But folks are too busy with their own concerns to listen. That's where it is."

"Are you spending any time here?" asked Mr. Joliffe. He liked greatly her face and manner, albeit she did not exactly chime in with his notions of lady-like refinement. He could not help liking her.

"I've been here three weeks with my niece. No, I don't mean to stay much longer. I shall cross the St. Gothard on Wednesday or Thursday and meet my daughter at Lugano or Bellagio—I'm not sure which."

"This is not your first visit to the Continent!"

"O dear, no——" and she smiled a particularly bright attractive smile. "It's not my first, nor my second. I like to spend a good two months every summer going about. But the St. Gothard is new to me. I've been over the Simplon."

"Our plan is much the same as yours," said Mr. Joliffe. "St. Gothard and the Italian lakes. So I hope we may become better acquainted."

"This young lady isn't quite unknown to me," said the stranger, turning to Joan. "Ah, you are not so good at faces as I am. You are Miss Joan Breay, and I think you once had a friend called Nannie Pearce."

"Oh, it is Nannie you reminded me of," exclaimed Joan. "I couldn't think who it was."

"It's odd if I am like her, for I'm only her aunt by marriage," said the other, half laughing. "But I dare say I brought her to your mind, for the only time you ever saw me was in her sick-room. Don't you remember?"

"Mrs. Dodson—Nannie's favourite Aunt Mary?" asked Joan eagerly.

"I won't say as to the being a favourite, but my husband was Nannie's own uncle. I never saw much of poor little Nannie, but she was a good girl—a dear little girl. And you and she were friends too, and you were very kind to her. Yes, I am Mrs. Dodson, and this is my niece, Mrs. Macartney." She addressed the words half to Joan, half to Mr. Joliffe who seemed much interested. "We are in the same hotel, for I saw you all arrive to-day. Don't you think we ought to be finding our way back? It is getting dark, and there is a steepish bit to go down, and that young lady looks delicate."

"Kathleen! She is only tired," said Joan.

Kathleen scarcely seemed to hear what was going on. She stood up mechanically, and took her father's arm. They made the descent in company, Mr. Joliffe turning his head to address frequent remarks to the trio in his rear. Kathleen spoke scarcely a word till the hotel was reached, when she quitted her father and went straight to her own room. Hardwicke met her at the door with a troubled, "Now, Miss Leena!" Kathleen said only, "Don't tell papa," and fainted away.

"I'll disobey for once," murmured Hardwicke, and as soon as Kathleen was sufficiently recovered to be left, she went in search of Mr. Joliffe, to explain what had happened. "Miss Joliffe could not go downstairs, of course," she added.

Mr. Joliffe was very much distressed, blaming himself for not noticing her fatigue, and almost declaring that he would not be at table d'hôte at all that evening. It was the first time he had had to do so without his darling. He thought better of this, however, and not only went, but remained downstairs for two hours afterwards, in conversation, while Kathleen lay expecting each moment to see him. He found the two ladies pleasant companions. Mrs. Dodson especially was a most intelligent agreeable person, with a rare kind of breezy freshness about her. She had been left a widow some fifteen years earlier, with an only child, evidently well off as to worldly goods. Though herself not quite a lady by birth or early training, and though with relatives on her husband's side also who would not have been admitted into Rockston "society," she had in later years read much, travelled much seen much of the world, and appeared to be a woman, not only of fine natural character, but of cultivated mind and considerable savoir faire, albeit with a certain nameless lack of high-bred tone and Mrs. Macartney, her niece by marriage, was young and gentle, having soft sad eyes and pale golden hair. She had lost her husband very suddenly, and was suffering from the shock. Mr. Joliffe

pitied her, and was drawn to them both in a friendly way; while Joan discovered in Mrs. Dodson a certain resemblance to her dear Miss Jackson, and was delighted. Other people failed to see the resemblance.

CHAPTER XX.

A SUNDAY AT LUCERNE.

"My dear, Hardwicke does not think you ought to go out this afternoon," said Mr. Joliffe. Kathleen had been with him to the English service, and had sat beside him at luncheon, as usual. She was spent by this time, and lay on the bed in her little room, which overlooked the lake.

"I am sorry, papa, but I don't much think I could walk," said Kathleen. "If you want a turn, do you think you would mind going with Joan for once? Or would you rather stay in? I should like so much to have you to read to me, and presently we can go into the garden together."

"I will read to you by and by, certainly, darling. Joan and Mrs. Dodson and Mrs. Macartney talk of having a quiet stroll, so perhaps I had better go with them and return in half an hour. A little sleep will do you good, and you will be quite undisturbed. What pleasant people they are!"

"Yes, Mrs. Macartney particularly. Mrs. Dodson looks good," said Kathleen. "There is something in her face which makes one feel confidence in her. Only I am a little sorry that Joan takes to her quite so much, for she is not a thorough lady."

"Not by birth, perhaps, but she is well off, and accustomed to society, and she quite takes the position of one, my dear."

"Yes,—it is only that there is a certain something wanting. No one would call her vulgar, for she has no pretension about her, and she is simple and at her ease. It is only that she is not quite a lady. But I don't want to say anything unkind of her, papa. She is very nice, and I am sure she is very good. Mrs. Macartney tells Joan that she is always doing kindnesses. She often denies herself luxuries that she may have the more money to give away."

"That is a kind of self-denial which one does not often see in people who have become well-to-do in middle life," said Mr. Joliffe. "It must be an estimable character."

"I dare say it is. She has a fine face," said Kathleen. "Then I shall see you back soon, papa."

"Very soon; and I hope I shall find that you have had a good sleep, my child."

Mr. Joliffe went away, and Kathleen shut her eyes. She was weary and sad, and a fit of longing for her mother was upon her. Two or three tears forced their way from beneath her eyelids. Somehow she had not expected Mr. Joliffe to be so content to go without her. It was quite right and natural, no doubt, that he should do so; but Kathleen was a little startled at the acuteness of her own pain. She had not before been aware how much she valued her position with her father; how much she prided herself

on being his all; how much she reckoned on his exclusive devotion to herself. Why should he not be content to leave her for an hour? How unreasonable to expect or wish him to stay indoors, simply because she could not go also! Kathleen said all this to herself, and tried to believe that she was satisfied—yet the pain was there still. "I must be growing jealous," she thought. "I did not know it was in me. Perhaps it is a good thing to have my eyes opened."

The half-hour grew into an hour, and no one came near her. The noise outside made sleep seem an impossibility. She had, from where she lay, a view of part of the town, and of the gay Sunday fair, with its whirligigs and its merry throng of pleasure-seekers; and the rattle of music and hum of voices came up unceasingly, while all around was the mighty sweep of silent mountain summits, as they had stood for ages past. The contrast of grandeur and littleness was marked. Kathleen tried to forget the rattle of sounds, and to think only of those solemn heights, and for a while she read her little Testament. Then Hardwicke came softly in.

- "Miss Leena—alone!" she said. "I thought my master was here."
 - "He has gone for a walk," said Kathleen.
- "And you've been resting. How do you feel, Miss Kathleen?"

Kathleen had not much to say for herself. Hard-wicke stood looking at the wan little face.

"The noise makes your head ache, doesn't it?" she said.

"Yes; but it is too warm to have the window shut."

"It's worse than heathendom, kicking up a row like that of a Sunday," said Hardwicke. "You wouldn't like to sit in the garden a bit, Miss Leena."

"I hardly think I can," Kathleen said. "If I don't keep quiet now, I shall not be at dinner with papa."

"I wish Dr. Ritchie was here," said Hardwicke from the bottom of her heart.

"I had a letter from Lady Catherine this morning, and she hopes to get away with him directly for a short holiday. They speak of a fortnight at the Italian lakes. I thought at first that we might possibly meet them here, but papa has been talking of going on to Rome."

"What's put Rome into his head?" demanded Hardwicke in an unwontedly curt tone.

"I don't know, Hardwicke. I should like to see Rome."

Hardwicke thought she would not. "There's Mrs. Dodson and Mrs. Macartney going," she said, with an air of dissatisfaction.

"No, I believe not!"

"I heard Mrs. Dodson a-telling Miss Breay she meant to," said Hardwicke.

Kathleen made no immediate answer. Her next words were,—"I don't think I can talk more now. Please give me that little hymn-book off the table, 'Songs amid the Shadows.'"

Hardwicke obeyed, but said, "You're not fit to read, Miss Joliffe."

"Not much. I only want to find something to think about."

Hardwicke took a seat near the window, and looked out, with bent brows of disapproval. Kathleen turned slowly to one or two favourite pages. The hymn which Kenison had read to her one day, shortly before her mother's death, was there, but she could not trust herself to peruse it. She went to another equally familiar.

"Come, Lord, and fight the battle,
My hands are tired and faint;
I have no strength to struggle,
Consider my complaint!
One of Thy weakest soldiers
Is weary in the field;
Yet thine is all the victory,
Thy love is all my shield.

"Tis not that I am weary
Of service done for Thee!
"Tis not that I would alter
Thy loving will for me.
Sweet is the vineyard labour
Through all the toil and heat;
And sweet the lonely night-watch,
Safe resting at Thy feet."

"Yet, Lord, there is a warfare
No eye but Thine may see;
Oh, hear my cry for succour,
Come, Thou, and fight for me.
The self I cannot conquer,
The will that still is mine,
Oh take them both, Lord Jesus,
And make them one with Thine.

"Take them! I cannot yield them,
I am not what I seemed;
I have no power, Lord Jesus,
To do what once I dreamed.
The yearning of the earth-life
Is stronger than my strength;
When may the spell be broken,
And freedom come at length?

"Like dew on drooping blossoms,
Like breath from Holy Place,
Laden with health and healing,
Come with Thy words of grace;
'Thy strength is all in leaning
On one who fights for thee;
Thine is the helpless clinging,
And Mine the victory."

That was calming. Others had fought the same battle, others had met the same temptations, others had come out victorious. Kathleen had a temptation to meet, a battle to fight, that afternoon, and she knew it. She shut the book, and lay with closed eyes, repeating now and then to herself:

"The self I cannot conquer,
The will that still is mine,
Oh take them both, Lord Jesus,
And make them one with Thine."

And she did not know how the afternoon had passed, when suddenly she opened her eyes to find her father by her side.

"Better, my sweet one?" he asked. "You have had quite a nice sleep."

"Have I been asleep?" asked Kathleen.

I am glad we "So Hardwicke says; for a while. did not return sooner, or I should have disturbed you. We were beguiled onwards. I wish you had come too. Mrs. Dodson and Mrs. Macartney are capital walkers, and really most pleasant companions. Joan is striking up quite an intimacy with Mrs. Dodson; and I should say it is a healthier friendship for Joan than that with Miss Jackson. tainly is a woman of very superior mind,—well read, too, and refined in her ideas, which is more than one would perhaps expect at first sight. You must see a little more of her, Leena. We think it would be pleasant to make an excursion or two together, beginning with the ascent of the Rigi to-morrow, if fine. You must really come there with us, my darling, so be sure you have a good night!"

But if she could not go, he would go without her. Kathleen understood, and in the rush of painful feeling which followed, it seemed to her that the afternoon's struggle and apparent victory had been all thrown away. Yet it was not so in reality.

"I am coming down to dinner," she said, rising; and she sat through it, and accompanied her father to the evening service, and did not leave him again till bedtime.

She paid for her exertions by an almost sleepless night, and appeared pale and haggard in the morning. "Not fit for the Rigi," was the general verdict, but for once Kathleen showed herself obstinate. She was bent upon going, and counsel and entreaty alike failed to move her. Mrs. Dodson had rather a

surprised look, and remarked apart to Joan, "Your cousin looks so gentle that I should have thought her easier to manage. She ought not to attempt the excursion."

- "So Hardwicke says. But Kathleen likes her own way, Mrs. Dodson."
 - " Most of us do," said Mrs. Dodson.
- "And I suppose she would find it dull alone in the hotel."
- "Is that all? I would stay with her gladly. I have been up the Rigi before. I thought she was going for Mr. Joliffe's sake."
- "Yes, so she says. But I really don't believe my uncle would mind, if Kathleen did not make herself so necessary to him," said Joan.
- "Well, we can't judge for others," said Mrs. Dodson. "I will keep watch, and if she seems tired when we reach the foot of the mountain, I can bring her back."

Kathleen did not give in, however, and the ascent was accomplished. They went by steamboat to Vitznau, and thence up the Rigi-Kulm by rail, a very prosaic mode of ascent in sound, but in reality fascinating.

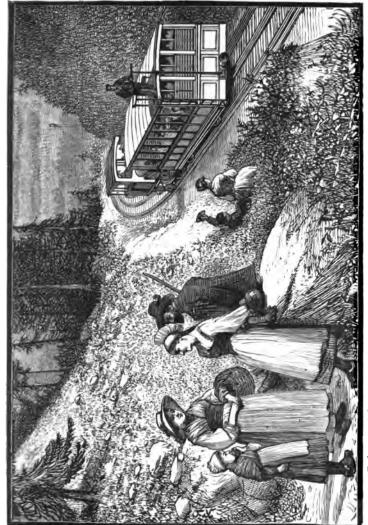
Kathleen was in one compartment by her father's side, and Joan was in the next with the two ladies. Mr. Joliffe found his own companion unwontedly silent, and he repeatedly leant forward to exchange remarks with the others.

It was a grand scene—grander, perhaps, seen thus in a rapid rise, than it could have been in a slow foot

ascent. Sitting still, to be borne steadily upwards, the impression on the mind was one of excitement and exhilaration, almost as of a rush into cloudland. Not that all felt alike. Mr. Joliffe occupied himself with his neighbours as much as with the scenery. Kathleen turned giddy, and scarcely ventured to take a peep at the depths below. Mrs. Macartney smiled serenely, as she might have done upon the most level of pasture-lands. Mrs. Dodson's face showed thorough enjoyment. Joan stood eagerly up, with flushed cheeks, preferring to go forwards rather than backwards.

Each moment the horizon widened, and mountain after mountain sprang into view—view after view burst upon the sight. Wild peaks were there. crowned with perpetual snows, also fantastic rocks and fierce precipices, castle-like promontories, deep gorges, and glittering glaciers. As they rose, with only the jarring bumps of the cog-wheel to break the smoothness of their motion, the whole landscape had an extraordinarily slanting appearance, as if something were wrong with its perspective,—a delusion owing to the level of the carriage floor being at a different angle from the level of the horizon. This gave a certain air of dreamy unreality to the scene. It was righted, however, immediately they left the train and climbed the little space remaining.

On the summit they paused to take breath and admire. The peaks of the Wetterhorn, the Schreckhorn, and the mighty Jungfrau showed in the far



" Each moment the horizon widened, and mountain after mountain sprung into view; view after view burst upon the sight."—Fags 194.

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distance, and between lay bewildering masses of glorious mountain-heights. Glaciers were visible, glistening with translucent brightness. Cloudlets lay low here and there upon the mountain-sides; but the summits were clear, except that mist wreaths clung to the Jungfrau and her lofty neighbours. The lakes of Lucerne and Zug were within sight: and hundreds of tiny villages, with church-steeples, scattered far and wide; and thousands of châlets dotting the intervening spaces. In one direction lay a wild tangle of mountains, in the other a fair and smiling lowland. The Rossberg, showing signs of the tremendous landslip of the past, stood near. Mount Pilatus, though rugged and beautiful still, had a dwarfed appearance.

They could have remained for hours, and some proposals were made to that effect. Mr. Joliffe was willing, but Mrs. Dodson touched Joan. "Your cousin"——she said in a low voice,—"must return by train."

"Kathleen talked of walking down with us all," said Joan aloud.

"Impossible. If you three like to walk, I will take Miss Joliffe home," said Mrs. Dodson.

Kathleen would not hear of this. If her father walked, she should walk, she quietly said. Mr. Joliffe decided against the walk, and they went down as they had come up.

The next day there was a change in the weather. They had a long ramble, despite drizzling rain, and Kathleen was of the party. Hardwicke could not make out whether or no she was better. She made no complaints, and looked ill, yet she seemed to have more strength. Was it only determination?

The day after they started for the Italian lakes.

CHAPTER XXI.

ST. GOTHARD'S PASS.

MRS. Dodson's journal, a regularly-kept record, contained at this time the following entries:

"Fluellen, Wednesday Evening.—We left Lucerne to-day, and came here by steamboat. The arm of the lake that one goes through on the way to Fluellen is to my mind the grandest of all,—not that it must be the most beautiful because it is the grandest. There are different sorts of beauty. But it is grand and beautiful too, no question about that. The channel is narrow, and the water to-day was of a curious rich blue-green colour, till the weather clouded over, and everything turned grey.

"On either side, all along that arm of the lake, we had fine heights,—to the right especially, mountain after mountain overshadowing us, many a one from seven to ten thousand feet high. A good-sized English hill would be but a mound here. We had a view of a splendid glacier, with its edges of clear green ice, on the saddle between the two peaks of the Uri-Rothstock.

"And now we're at Fluellen, in the hotel, with

mountains shutting us in all round, so close as to give one a half-smothered feeling. I shouldn't like to live in Fluellen, but it is worth seeing. Just opposite there's a mountain called Gitschen, and it does toss up its head with a proud air into the sky—eight thousand feet high, they say, twice the height of Lochnagar. But of course it doesn't look so, among so many others as big and bigger.

"The Joliffes are our fellow-travellers still, and Mr. Joliffe seems to like to keep with us. I don't mind if they do, for I like them.

"Viola's plans are altered, and I am sorry for it. It isn't her fault, at least I hope not. The child can't help her friends being uncertain. But I am sometimes a little afraid that my child begins to have a sort of hankering after more independence. Some girls do, I suppose. When I look back to my own lonely hard-working girlhood, I wonder at it. But they do. The very thought about Viola gives me a heartache. Still it's no good to turn one's eyes from truth, though I wouldn't utter it but to my journal.

"I did hope to meet Viola at Pallanza, and now it has to be Rome. This will make me hurry on instead of staying about the Italian lakes. Mary Macartney does not mind either way. If Viola could have joined us, a fortnight at the lakes would have been nice, but I am getting impatient to be with her again.

"I told Mr. Joliffe my change of plan. He

seemed sorry, and said after a minute, 'I am not at all sure that I shall not take the girls straight on to Rome, and leave the lakes for another time.' Miss Joliffe said, 'Oh, please don't,' but he said, 'I think it would be a very pleasant plan, my darling.' And then the subject was dropped.

"I noticed something else a little later. A long letter had arrived in the morning for Miss Joliffe, which she had just glanced at and put into her pocket. I suppose she had not found time for it all day. While we were waiting for dinner, she took it out, and Mr. Joliffe asked who had written. She said, 'Minnie Baring, papa.' Near the end I saw her suddenly turn quite white, and she put the letter down as if she did not know what she was Mr. Joliffe evidently thought she meant him to read, and he took up the sheet. Miss Joliffe made a half movement as if to stop him, but he did not see. I said, 'I think Miss Joliffe wants her dinner more than any one,' and I poured out a glass of wine and took it to her, just in time to keep her from going quite off. She only said, 'Thank you, I am rather tired!' But, poor child, it wasn't mere tiredness.

"After dinner Mr. Joliffe gave her back the letter, and I heard him say softly, 'You see, darling, it is just as I supposed,—he has soon forgotten his little fancy.' And she gave him a pitiful smile, and said, 'O yes, it is all quite right, dear papa!' I began to talk with Joan at once, so if any more passed we did not hear.

"Joan Breay is a bright sort of girl. They say she is quite different at home. I should not wonder if she wants occupation and interest. Half the ailments of young ladies now-a-days come from such a want. I shouldn't object to take that girl in hand for two years.

"Mr. Joliffe I like increasingly. He is a fine-looking man, and such a thorough gentleman. Joan has told me all about his wife's death and the troubles that hastened it. Miss Joliffe is a sweet girl. I don't think I ever saw a more lovely and lovable little face, but so delicate. I should be frightened if I were her father. She doesn't take to me as Joan does. She is cold, and her manners, though very gentle, have a certain 'hold-off' air. Perhaps the coldness comes from her state of health. She certainly is weak, and she persists in overdoing herself.

"It is odd how Mr. Joliffe shapes his plans by ours. Of course we could check it, but why should we? They are nice people to know and to be with. I have had a sort of wonder once or twice whether he is a little taken by Mary. But I don't think it. I think it is just a general liking for companions, and we seem to suit him. Mary is quite wrapped up in her own trouble still, and Mr. Joliffe is never thoroughly happy unless he has his daughter with him."

"Thursday Evening.—Here we are up at Hospenthal, lodging at the Meyerhof, with God's 'everlasting hills' all round us.

"There's nothing like them in nature. The sea is

beautiful, and at times terrible. But there is something in mountains which seems to overawe and overpower one. I can't describe what I mean, but I have a kind of lifted-up feeling when I am among mountains, just the opposite to the depressed feeling which comes over one on a flat plain.

"It has been a splendid coach-drive to-day through the Pass. The road wound up and up, through a tremendous rocky gorge, passing eight times backwards and forwards over the river Reuss which foamed below. Every minute the scene grew more desolate, with a wonderful kind of fierce beauty about it. There were steep granite precipices rising straight on either side like walls, and huge rock boulders were scattered about in the torrent-bed, just where they have gone crashing down from time to time.

"Crossing the Devil's Bridge, the sight was at its grandest. It made one hold one's breath. Such a rush of water, with sheets of spray coming over the diligence, and the deep gorge winding away downwards behind, clear cut as if with a knife between those wonderful rock walls, standing up, I suppose, thousands of feet high. It was like the opening into some mighty giant castle, and yet that thought is too small, for no such castle was ever seen or heard of.

"We had a dull day, and no sunshine,—yet there must have been a gleam somewhere. For near that wildest part of all, where the river was so mad and the precipices were so grand, just there I saw a broad soft belt of rainbow, lying above across the

opening between the great rock-walls, and against the grey sky.

"God has His stern rocks as well as His sweet meadows in the world and in our lives. But the rainbow of heavenly promises spans both alike—and I'm not sure that it doesn't shine brighter over the rocks than over the meadows.

"The one drawback in the day was heavy rain most of the time. Maybe, frowning weather suited the frowning rocks better than sunshine would have done. But I would have liked to see that gorge in sunshine.

"I was with Mr. Joliffe and his daugher and niece in the foremost diligence, and the maid was in the second, and Mary had a seat in the coupé. I try to get her the beat of everything, to distract her thoughts, and though she says little, no doubt she really does enjoy herself after her own fashion.

"Miss Joliffe's sad little face went to my heart. She tried so hard to look and admire, as much as was expected of her, and always replied in a moment to her father; but the pretty blue eyes kept wandering to some far-off distance, and the sweet mouth kept taking such a sorrowful set. I couldn't do anything for her, however, beyond a touch of attention now and then to her bodily comforts.

"We reached here about two, and she was so worn out that she has had to spend the afternoon on her bed. Hardwicke has stayed with her. I offered to do so, but the refusal was quite decided; I could not press it.

"I don't think I am very proud—at least I hope not. Perhaps I am—more than I think.

"I wasn't born quite a lady—I know that—and I wasn't bred one either for the first thirteen years of my life. The only 'advantages' I had then were my aunt's hard and tight hand over me, and my own love of doing everything thoroughly, whether it was scrubbing a room or learning a lesson. I don't think I am the worse now for those years of hard work. I have no shame in looking back to them. If I am not a lady by birth or training, I do not see why I shouldn't be one in kindness and thought for others.

"There's a certain something in the manner though—in Miss Joliffe's manner for instance—which isn't in mine and never will be. And I know that, and I don't see that I need be unhappy or ashamed about it. It was God who put me in my position as a child, and who changed it after, and who gave me my good husband later, and plenty of money and friends. And my friends have to take me as I am. If I make mistakes, I can bear being told of them.

"No, I don't think pride comes in there...

"But I have one very strong feeling of another kind, and that is that I can't bear ever to put myself where I'm not wanted. If Miss Joliffe would let me, I would tend her like a mother, poor little motherless sorrowful thing. My heart aches for her. But I can't go, if she doesn't want me. I can't offer it a second time. There's a sort of manner about

her, gentle as she is, which makes me bristle up and draw back into myself, though perhaps I don't show it. Is that pride, or is it only what is called 'delicacy?' I do not quite know. Yet how could I do otherwise? And yet again the poor little thing does so want looking after.

"It could not be helped, or so I thought, and we four started on a ramble up the mountain-side. We were about seven thousand feet high, but it was only damp and showery, not cold. Mary soon grew fainthearted at the bogginess of the ground, and Mr. Joliffe took her back; while Joan and I went a little farther. And as we were walking, she told me something. She reminded me of the story which she had told me about poor little Cleve Joliffe, and the gun accident, and the young clergyman, Mr. Marshall Corrie, who was hurt. 'Uncle says he has just heard that Mr. Corrie is engaged to a young lady out in Australia,' she said. 'Some one has told Kathleen so in a letter. I wonder what Kathleen thinks. Miss Jackson used to fancy that he cared for Kathleen, but this just shows how people are mistaken.'

"So perhaps it does, but I could not help thinking of the white face over the letter yesterday."

CHAPTER XXII.

A MOUNTAIN TORRENT.

THE journal was resumed two days later, and contained an entry of unwonted length.

"Saturday, Hotel Grande, Milan.—Yesterday we all hoped to reach Lugano by the evening; but we did not succeed in doing so.

"About half-past five in the morning we started from the Meyerhof. It was chilly work standing about at so great a height, and at that early hour, waiting for our seats. A second smaller diligence, or 'supplementary carriage,' had to be got ready, as there were too many passengers to go in the one Happily it did not rain then. diligence. Joliffe was so shivering that I gave her my arm, and said, 'You are not well.' She said, 'No. I think I must be going to be ill. Don't tell papa, please only if either you or Hardwicke could be in the same diligence with me, I should be glad.' For there had been some talk of her being alone with her father, away from the rest of us. I said, 'Keep quiet, my dear, and I'll settle it.' She might not have quite liked me to call her 'my dear' at another time, per-

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haps, but it came naturally; and she was too poorly to mind anything just then.

"I had made sure of a coupé seat for Mary, which she went to in her quiet way, perfectly content with anything I chose to arrange. Mary's is an odd nature. She never thinks of offering to give up the best to anybody else, yet if the worst falls to her share she is just as willing to have it, and never grumbles.

"Two back seats in the diligence remained. Miss Joliffe looked at me, and said, 'I don't think I can go backwards to-day:' and I knew Mr. Joliffe would want to have her with him. I thought I might do more for her comfort than a servant could do, so I told Joan that she and Hardwicke had better step in. Mr. Joliffe and his daughter and I waited for the supplementary carriage, and a stout Frenchman made our fourth. He had been with us the day before, and I could not quite forgive him for sleeping through some of the best bits of the pass. People are so differently made. What is real heart-joy to one is just a row of big rocks to another.

"The first part of our journey this second day was wild and bare. We had our carriage open for a little while, but drenching rain came on, and it had to be shut up. When we had gone over the very highest part of the pass, we had a steep descent, the road winding to and fro down the mountain, in a sharp zig-zag, with narrow bends. The diligence whirled down at a swinging pace, not

slackening for the turns. There were no walls or fences, but only low heaps of stones dotted along the outside edge of the road, and very near that edge we went.

"I would have liked to see the Valley of the Ticino, which we soon after reached, on a fine day. That wanted sunshine, whether or no the gorge did. But all the heights on either side were wrapped above in thick mist; and rain poured in torrents; and to right and left there were cascades and waterfalls streaming down the mountain-sides in numbers past counting. Some of them were magnificent; and any one of the lesser falls, among the scores that we passed, would be counted well worth a tenmiles' walk in England, just for a sight of it. poured quietly, and some leaped from rocky shelves. and some flung clouds of spray around, and some sprang out in broad-spreading sheets. I never was in such a wonderful world of waters.

"Well, so things went on, till at last we passed the village of Giornico, where we made a halt. Italians are given to dawdling, and their dawdling at Giornico cost us something yesterday. However, we were off at last, and we passed a little village called Bodio, which was half under water. Biasca lay quite near, and we meant to go straight on to Lugano before night. Mr. Joliffe's plan had been to spend a few days there. As we were passing Bodio, however, he said he had come to the determination not to stop more than one night at Lugano, but to go straight on to Milan, and when there he

would settle whether Rome or the round of the lakes should come first.

"Miss Joliffe said nothing to this. He was speaking to me rather than to her. I thought it was kindest to leave her quiet, so I tried to keep Mr. Joliffe in conversation, that she need not have to talk. I had my doubts if she would be fit to go on from Biasca, much less from Lugano, and least of all from Milan—whichever she managed to get to.

"All at once our horses came to a stand-still, and we saw that something was wrong. What that something was soon became clear. Just ahead there was a bridge over a stream—at least the bridge ought to have been over the stream. But the tremendous rain had so swollen the stream that it came pouring in a strong brown current right over the bridge and across our road.

"The torrent grew every moment more and more strong. The first diligence had been just in time to dash through, and had reached the other side in safety. But ours had waited too long at the last halting-place, and we were ten minutes behind. That ten minutes made all the difference. When we came up, the horses stopped short and turned their heads the other way, and would not even try it. Poor things—they had sense enough to know it was not safe.

"So there were we, within a few minutes of Biasca, and yet no more able to get to Biasca than if we had been a hundred miles away. The Italians walked about, and made plenty of talk, but seemed

to have no notion what to do. Our Frenchman was in a fume, but we all settled not to get out, as it was best to keep dry while we could. Miss Joliffe looked anxious, and asked how long we should be kept there, and her father said, in rather a despairing sort of way, 'All night, perhaps,' which was not exactly cheering. I have noticed that Mr. Joliffe is easily depressed, and apt to take the worst view of things.

"There was a thunderstorm going on, and though we had not heard it so plainly while we were driving, the crashes among the mountains sounded grand now we were still.

"We looked out from time to time, but what could be done? There stood the horses with drooping heads, forlorn and miserable; and the rain pelted on, and the rushing flood grew deeper and wider. I could see it higher up the mountain-side, dashing down almost like a waterfall, carrying rocks and stones along with it.

"For two hours we sat waiting there, and all this while the three who had gone on were alarmed enough. At first a report reached them that our diligence had tried to cross, and had been carried down the stream. Then that was contradicted; and a diligence with four horses was sent from Biasca to our rescue. But it was no use. They could no more reach us than we could reach them. No horse could cross in such a torrent.

"So at last our driver turned round and drove us back to Giornico. There was only a poor Italian inn there, not any hotel. We did not give up hopes of getting to Biasca still before night; for both Miss Joliffe and her father seemed to dread the thoughts of sleeping in the inn, and I was anxious to reach Mary. Also I had my doubts how much longer Miss Joliffe's strength would hold out, and Giornico was no place for her to be taken ill in.

"However, there was no knowing how long the rain would last, so we took rooms, lest they should be engaged by other people, and none remain for us—one for Mr. Joliffe and one for us two. Miss Joliffe seemed to cling to me, poor child, and to dread being alone. Not that she was affectionate like Joan, but only helpless, and craving care.

"The front room was crowded with smoking Italians, but the back room was quieter. Other travellers as well as ourselves were stopped by the weather.

"We all were in the back salon together, if one may call the room by so grand a name. Dinner was ordered, and the best that could be had in the inn was brought for us. Mr. Joliffe and I managed well enough, but Miss Joliffe could eat nothing.

"I took her upstairs after dinner to the little white-washed room, and made her lie down, wrapped in shawls. She let me do what I liked with her, and at first seemed very thankful to be still. But soon she was saying, 'I am afraid papa will want me.'

"'Not yet, my dear,' I said. 'Don't be uneasy. You find this comfortable, I think?'

- "She said, 'Yes,' in a worn-out tone, and then, 'I didn't know how to keep up any longer.'
- "'You kept up too long,' I said. 'You should have let me bring you here before dinner. But never mind now. Try to get a little rest.'
- "'I can't,' she said, opening her eyes. 'I do so want to get on—somewhere else. If only papa would stay a little while at Lugano.'
 - "'It would be better for you,' I said.
- "'Yes, only papa doesn't wish it,' she said. 'It must be just as he wishes, of course. But I am so afraid I shall have to wait somewhere. I think I must be ill,—only, please don't say so to him. I never felt as I do to-day.'
 - "'It might be kinder to tell him,' I said.
- "'O no, because it may pass off,' she replied. 'I don't know what he would do. I think if I could just lie quiet a whole day I should be better. But I don't want to stay here.'
- "'We shall see presently,' I said. 'It is too early to know yet. There is plenty of time. If you could get ten minutes' sleep it would do you good.'
- "She shut her eyes, but opened them almost directly.
- "'I can't,' she said in her gentle way. 'I don't think I can sleep. If I shut my eyes, I seem to be falling down precipices. Mrs. Dodson, do you think I am going to be ill?'
- "'Yes,' I said. 'If you go on as you have done lately, there is very little doubt about it. You haven't strength for half that you undertake.'

- "'No, I know,' she said. 'But—papa——'
- "'Mr. Joliffe is the last to want you to kill yourself for him,' I said. 'And, my dear, it is no kindness to him in the end. And it is wrong too. God didn't give you your life that you might fling it away.'
- "She sighed once or twice, and two tears rolled down her face.
- "'I don't want to do wrong,' she said. 'I thought it was right. I thought I ought to do all I could.'
- "'Yes, but not more than you could,' I said.
 'That is what you have been doing. And it is not good for your father, my dear. It isn't good for anybody to be completely dependent on another for everything.'
- "'I thought I ought,' she said again. 'I thought it right, and I have tried so hard—to keep him from missing her. It was her wish——'
- "The poor child could not get any further, and she sobbed in a heart-broken way, yet struggling hard not to let her tears get the mastery. I did not think they were only for her mother. There was not much to be said, but I soothed her, and stroked her hair, and treated her like the poor little wounded heart-sore bird that I believed her to be,—even kissing her once. I wondered how she would like it all later, but she made no resistance then, though she did not return the kiss.
- "Then a fit of trembling came on. The sobbing stopped, but she turned cold, and the bed shook under her. She said once or twice in the midst of it, 'If only they would get out of the diligence!'

- "'Perhaps they will presently,' I said. 'But if they don't----'
- "'Oh, I should not like to stay here,' she said.
 'It seems to frighten me. I did not like the look of those men downstairs'. And then she had another trembling fit.
- "I thought I would try a different sort of help from any I had tried yet. And when the shivering went off, I said aloud, without any kind of preface:
- "'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
- "'I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God; in Him will I trust...
- "'He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust; His truth shall be thy shield and buckler,
- "'Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day.'
- "And so on, with two or three more. I never saw so quick a change come over any face. The strained look seemed to die away, as a shadow fades before sunshine, and a faint smile broke out all over it, slowly.
- "'Thank you,' she said. 'I think that was what I wanted; I think I was forgetting.
- "'There can't come much harm to one under His wing,' I said.
- "'O no. Thank you,' she said again. And she shut her eyes, and lay quite still, till Mr. Joliffe tapped at the door and looked in,

"'I'm going to ask about the diligence,' he said.
'The rain has stopped, and it is star-light. What does Kathleen wish—if they count it safe to go on?'

"'I would rather not stay here, papa,' she said.

"'Well, I'll make inquiries,' he said; and after he was gone I strapped things together, and made so far ready that it would not take us long to prepare for a start.

"'It was well I did so, for when Mr. Joliffe came back, he exclaimed, 'Diligence going in five minutes -not a moment to lose.' Miss Joliffe started up. and I helped her on with her jacket and hat, and rolled up the remaining shawls. In less than three minutes, I think, she and I were downstairs, and we waited till Mr. Joliffe came hurrying after ushe is one of those men who always get into a scurry at a push, and don't seem able to help it—and then there was a rush along the street. I had my arm round Miss Joliffe, helping her, or she could hardly have been in time. Another minute and we were off. Miss Joliffe nestled into the corner with a sigh of relief. I kept back mine till we should be on the other side of the torrent. One could not tell what state the bridge might be in after the pouring of such a flood over it for hours. But even if we waited, rain might come on again in the morning, and make matters worse. I thought.

"We reached the spot, and were whirled across, in the dark, at helter-skelter speed. There was a great dashing and splashing, and the water came up to our axle-trees. No damage was done, however,

and we reached the other side in safety. After that we passed through more deep water, and lastly we crossed the bridge over the Ticino,—such a foaming billowy rush of water beneath us, glistening like silver in the moonbeams.

"Then our adventure was over. We reached the hotel at Biasca, and had a warm welcome. Mary met me as if I had just returned from the North Pole. I was told that Joan had quite cried with anxiety about her cousin, and I was not sorry to hear it. Those two girls ought to draw closer together than they do.

"The poor little Kathleen was past much of relief or gratitude, and she had to be almost carried to her room. I said to her father, 'That child is ill, Mr. Joliffe,' and he said, 'She does not seem quite the thing, certainly. I am glad we have decided on Milan to-morrow. If needful we can have advice for her there.'

"I doubted if she would be fit for the journey this morning, and in fact I don't think she was, but she came down to breakfast, and made the best of herself,—and here we are. My plan is to go straight on, Monday or Tuesday, with Mary. The Joliffes seem all in uncertainty.

"Monday, Milan.—The question now is, What shall be done? Miss Joliffe is too ill to think of going any farther.

"Yesterday was a trying day to all. Mary alone lives in a quiet atmosphere apart from Joliffe anxieties. I cannot be indifferent as she is. The Joliffes are pleasant friends. Mr. Joliffe has been very kind; and this Kathleen wins my heart, with her sweet manners, and her lovely eyes, and her sorrowful looks, and her pride. Yes, she is proud, and I don't think she knows it, for she is humble too —wonderfully humble. But she wins my heart—far more than poor dear Joan, who follows me about like a sort of pet lap-dog.

"I had to act as the Italian doctor's interpreter, and he did not seem able to say much as to the nature of Miss Joliffe's illness. She was restless and low all day, and she is never happy unless her father is with her. He, poor man, does not, of course, care to spend his whole time in a sick-room. Men are not made for that sort of work. He is very good and tender with her, but the poor child is exacting, as sick folks often are.

"Hardwicke shows marked dislike to me, and would never let me come near Miss Joliffe, if she could help it. But for this, I would gladly stay a few days, and help. I love nursing, and it seems a sort of call to do a kindness. As things are, I am not sure that I should not be wise to go on to Rome at once.

"I can't quite see my way, or make up my mind what is right. Mary is no help. She only smiles, and says, 'Whatever you think best, aunt.' I sometimes wish she had an opinion of her own.

"I'll just wait and see. I have a great notion of waiting to know one's way. The guidance always comes sooner or later, if one just waits for it quietly.

The danger is of being impatient and making a move too soon.

"'The Lord shall guide thee continually.' That's a favourite promise with me. For 'continually' doesn't mean only 'sometimes.' It means always, every day, every moment, round every corner, through every tangle, over every difficulty. The only thing is just to wait, and to be willing.

"I shall be sorry if I have to say good-bye to the Joliffes. Joan will be sorry too—and perhaps Mr. Joliffe. I do not know about Miss Joliffe. Her manner to me since the evening at Giornico has not been quite so cold, but still she is reserved, and not affectionate.

"Tuesday Morning.—The matter is decided. A letter from Viola says she is not well, and wants me. That is my first call of duty. Mary and I leave this soon after mid-day.

"Mr. Joliffe talks of Rome still, but his daughter will not be able to come. I am sure of that. So this is really good-bye."

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN MILAN.

THREE weeks later an English lady stood in the broad nave of the Cathedral at Milan, not far from the centre, looking from one side to the other in a quiet absorption of enjoyment. She was well though plainly dressed; and she bore her head and carried herself generally with a certain indescribable careless grace, which marked her out from other women. From time to time she changed her position, thus obtaining a fresh view of the magnificent pillars and graceful arches. Then the bright dark eyes, shining with happy appreciation of architectural beauties, turned to the windows, scanning one after another, not too critically, yet in no blind admiration of aught that they might happen to alight upon.

Having wandered from painted glass to the roof, the said eyes remained in an upward gaze, lost in the appearance of lace-like carving above, till they must have ached with the exertion. Suddenly descending to a lower level, they encountered two other dark eyes, of a more ordinary type, set in a narrow face of a somewhat muddy complexion.

[&]quot;Miss Breay!"

The answering "Is it really Lady Catherine?" if more hesitating, contained scarcely less of astonishment.

"You here still! Kathleen has written no letters of late, and I did not know what had become of you all."

"Kathleen did think of sending you word,—I mean, she half asked me one day to write," said Joan. "But she did not know where you would be. She remembered that you must have come abroad."

Lady Catherine was moving towards the door, Joan accompanying her. "True—I told her we were going. But when did you come to Milan?"

"Three weeks ago," said Joan, dropping her voice low, to match Lady Catherine's subdued tones. She had not hitherto cared for Lady Catherine particularly, but to see her under present circumstances was an unexpected delight, and Joan's manner grew positively cordial. "We are at the Hôtel Grande, and Kathleen has been ill."

" Has been?"

"She is better now—not well. But we are going home to-morrow; and Hardwicke thinks that will do her good. She is only just fit for the journey. One can't keep her quiet in a great hotel, and she frets so about uncle Albert."

"Is he not well?"

"O yes; but he left this morning for Rome."

If Lady Catherine had seen the entire cathedral vanish into thin air before her eyes, she would

scarcely have been more utterly astounded. She stood in silence, fairly stunned.

"Mr. Joliffe gone to Rome alone!" she at length found voice to utter. "Mr. Joliffe! Alone!—and leaving Kathleen ill!"

Uncle Albert was bent on going, and the doctor said it was quite impossible for Kathleen. He said she wanted the quiet of home, and Rome would be the worst place possible for her. He is a kind man, but we have had to get some one to translate for us what he said."

"Come here," said Lady Catherine, moving out into the porch. "We must not go farther, for my husband expects to meet me presently in the cathedral, Mr. Joliffe gone to Rome! I can hardly believe my own ears."

"He did not care for Milan," said Joan. "And Kathleen has not been so very ill, not enough to make one really afraid about her, I mean. It was only a sort of low feverish attack, with faintness, and all that sort of thing. Only it went on day after day, and I think uncle Albert grew rather tired of it. You see she could not go about with him, and he did not care to be always sitting with her, and yet if he stayed long away she seemed depressed and cried so. It is not like Kathleen exactly, but I don't know what has come over her lately. She has been overdone, and St. Gothard's Pass gave her a bad chill; and being weak, I suppose she could not keep up. Uncle Albert does not like people to cry or to be depressed. He told me he

found it very trying and distressing to have Kathleen like that, and after a few days he began to talk about Rome again."

Lady Catherine seemed to have some difficulty in controlling her feelings. She stood with folded hands, and a red spot in either cheek. Joan found it a relief to pour out these particulars.

"What made Mr. Joliffe think of Rome?"

"I don't know, only he seemed anxious to see the He said he had always had a parti-Catacombs. cular longing to go through them. And there are two ladies who have been travelling with us, at least we took the same journeys, and were a great deal together. Kathleen does not care for Mrs. Dodson much, but I never liked anybody more hardly. And Mrs. Macartney has one of the prettiest faces I ever saw. They were going on to Rome to meet Mrs. Dodson's daughter there. Mr. Dodson? O no, she is a widow, and so is Mrs. Macartney. I suppose it was their speaking about Rome which first made uncle Albert think of going. always talking about the Catacombs after they were gone."

If Joan believed in the Catacombs, Lady Catherine did not. An expressive glance was telegraphed to somebody else close at hand. Joan had been speaking with dropped eyes, after a common fashion of her own. She looked up now, to find Dr. Ritchie standing in front of her.

"How do you do?" he said quietly.

Joan gave him her hand, and Lady Catherine

said, "Go on, my dear; you need not be afraid of my husband. What next?"

"He told me once or twice that if Kathleen could not go, he had half a mind to send her and me home with Hardwicke, and to take a trip to He said the anxiety about Rome by himself. Kathleen had made him feel nervous, and he thought the change would do him good. But I did not suppose he really meant it, so I didn't say anything to Kathleen. And all at once, one morning, he said he meant to go directly she was well enough for the journey home. That was a week ago, I think. Kathleen was quite upset, and he was vexed with me for not telling her before of what he had said. I never interfere between him and Kathleen, and he would be annoyed generally if I did. But he hates scenes, and I suppose he thought I might have saved him this. Kathleen cried dreadfully, and he was angry, and he went out of doors and stayed away for hours, till she was frightened. She was quite ill the next two or three days, worse than before, I think. But since then she has not cried at all, and she insists on getting up, and on doing things for uncle, almost the same as usual, only she can't walk out. believe she wanted to seem quite well, and perhaps she thought he would not go. But the doctor said that Kathleen might travel home to-day, so uncle Albert made all arrangements for us, and settled to start himself for Rome. Kathleen did not say much when he told her. She has not cried again, and I

suppose she is afraid of vexing him. Something about tickets or trains—I forget what—made uncle decide on our journey being to-morrow instead of to-day, but he said he could not well change his day, so he went early this morning, and Kathleen was up to see him off. He said he meant to come home very soon, but he would not say when."

There was a brief silence. Dr. Ritchie's brow had a certain tense look about it, not commonly seen there, and Lady Catherine's two red spots had deepened. Joan began to wonder whether she had talked too freely.

"I don't know whether Kathleen would like me to say so much," she observed. "But you will come and see her, won't you?"

Dr. Ritchie's answer was a move, wordless still "Lead the way, my dear," Lady Catherine said in a calm voice, which told her husband of certain smouldering indignation fires. "Yes, we will see her at once. I think we had better arrange to travel home together."

"Oh, if we could!" cried Joan. "I should be so glad! I did dread the journey,—with Kathleen like this, and Hardwicke only able to speak English."

Lady Catherine's lips formed something, not audible. Dr. Ritchie gave her a warning glance, but he wore a troubled expression himself.

They crossed the road, and made their way into the Victor Emanuel gallery, with its glass roof, its gay shops, its cafés, its loungers and strollers, its Italian faces and Italian costumes: all interesting to an Englishman. Dr. Ritchie cast mechanical glances to right and left, noting what was worth being noted.

"This is the shortest way," Joan said. "Uncle Albert brought me here once to see the gallery by night, with the electric light, and the Italians sitting about, drinking coffee. If Kathleen had been well I dare say we should have come often, but he did not care to have me alone, so he used to sit indoors and complain. Do you think really that we can travel all together? Are you going back tomorrow?"

"The day after," said Dr. Ritchie.

"It would not matter. To-morrow might do as well," said Lady Catherine.

"Kathleen seems very anxious to be at home," said Joan. "I think she fancies that uncle Albert will come back, when once he knows her to be there and pretty well again."

"We are not going home at a rush," Lady Catherine said decisively. "My husband is due by a certain day,—and not before. But you need not say so to Kathleen. It may be best not to delay the actual starting,—if a night less here——"

Dr. Ritchie answered the half-uttered question: "I have no objection. What has been the matter with Kathleen, Miss Breay?"

Joan tried to explain, and his questions helped her, but she was not good at definitions. Reaching the hotel, she left the two downstairs, while she went to Kathleen's room. Lady Catherine turned then to her husband, and uttered the word which she had suppressed before,—

- "Atrocious!"
- "I should not have expected it of Mr. Joliffe."
- "I don't know what one may not expect from a man eaten through and through with selfishness," said Lady Catherine. "But to leave those two girls here, with no better protector than a servant——"

"Hardwicke is eminently respectable and reliable,—a confidential servant. He counts her one of the family, and is accustomed to depend upon her."

"That is no excuse. She cannot give the kind of protection needed by two young girls in a place like this. To see Joan Breay wandering alone through Milan to-day! Suppose it were our little May, ten years older!"

Dr. Ritchie drew his lips together.

"Yes—that shows!" she said. "Don't excuse him, my dear. It takes something to bring me to the boiling pitch, but when I am there I don't cool easily."

Dr. Ritchie half-smiled and said—"No need to warn you to be cautious."

"I'm not sure. Perhaps there is need. Joan seems improved, but one can't answer for her reticence. I will be careful. But that poor little Kathleen!" Then, with a change of voice,—"Mrs. Dodson! Mrs. Macartney! Which is it?"

- "Which?" repeated Dr. Ritchie.
- "Ah, you are a man," said Lady Catherine.

"Never mind. Be blind a little longer, if you can. Mrs. Macartney,—that is the pretty one. Joan seems to think the other individual worthy of comparison with Miss Jackson; but Mr. Joliffe's tastes would hardly coincide with Joan's. Poor little Leena!"

Dr. Ritchie shook his head slightly—not with but at her.

"I will be good now," she said. "I have let off some of the steam. And here comes Joan. She has been quick."

CHAPTER XXIV.

TESTING.

KATHLEEN was dressed and in an easy-chair near the window. The room was a comfortable one, upon the fourth story, but it overlooked the street, and the rattle from below was unceasing. Hardwicke sat near, mending a torn skirt of Joan's. When Dr. Ritchie and Lady Catherine entered, she laid it aside and rose. Kathleen too stood up, though trembling so much that the movement was clearly a matter of difficulty. She was very white and thin, and her eyelids had a heavy reddened look, apparently from want of sleep rather than from tear-shedding. Her quietness of manner had a certain strain about it.

"Sit down, Leena," Lady Catherine said, putting her back into the chair; and Kathleen submitted, only saying,

"I did not know you were here."

"Joan and I met in the cathedral, and I am glad that we did. It is only two days since Dr. Ritchie and I came to Milan."

Kathleen's lips moved tremulously, and then she said, "We are going home to-morrow."

"So your cousin tells us," said Dr. Ritchie. "What if we all travel home together?"

"I should like that. Papa has had to go to Rome," said Kathleen, speaking quickly, and looking from one to the other, as if she expected something to be said which she would not like.

"And you have not been well," said Dr. Ritchie.

"No," and the wistful blue eyes looked up. "Not very, Dr. Ritchie. But I am well now."

"Not quite, I think."

"O yes,—only everything tires me, and I want to be at home."

Joan asked unexpectedly, "Shall we leave you with Kathleen, Lady Catherine?" and an immediate, "Yes, if you please," settled the matter, while Kathleen seemed disposed rather to say, "No." She plainly dreaded questions as to her father.

"Do you think you are fit for the journey tomorrow?" Dr. Ritchie enquired, when Joan and Hardwicke were gone.

"O yes, quite. I must go, please, Dr. Ritchie. I should not like to wait. I want to be at home, and to send papa word that I am there, so that he can come any day. He said he should not be long, and I don't want him to have to put off because I am away from Rocklands."

She seemed so distressed at the thought of even a day's delay, that neither Dr. Ritchie nor Lady Catherine would press it. Evidently she was putting aside as much as possible the pain caused by the manner in which her father had left her, and was concentrating all her desires on the thought of welcoming him home, and being to him what she had been in the past. It gradually dawned upon Lady Catherine that the root of her shrinking manner was a dread of hearing her father blamed. Some slight expression of regret that he had not remained at Milan until after Kathleen and Joan had left, was met by an eager defence. "Papa could not bear to be upset in his plans," she said, "it always made him nervous. And he would have been so dull, alone in the hotel,—and they could not all start just together. So it was much best and quite right that he should go first."

She flushed and whitened alternately as she spoke, and put her hand to her temple.

"Is your head aching, Kathleen?" Dr. Ritchie asked, in answer.

"It always aches here," Kathleen said. "I think it is the noise in the street, partly. I do so want to be quiet. I am longing to be at Rocklands. And after this journey I think I shall be quite strong, and able to do anything that papa wants."

That was the leading thought, or it appeared to be so. Lady Catherine saw and heard with a heartache. She wondered whether the suspicion which had occurred to her had occurred to the girls.

Apparently not. Joan soon came back, and they had a long conversation about matters in general. Dr. Ritchie went away to make certain arrangements for the morrow's journey, but Lady Catherine remained, and heard divers particulars of the last

few weeks. The stay at Lucerne; the meeting with Mrs. Dodson and Mrs. Macartney; the ascent of the Rigi; the passage over the St. Gothard; were described in detail. Kathleen talked less than Joan, and seemed to avoid the subject of the two new acquaintances, only remarking languidly, when Joan expatiated on Mrs. Dodson's merits,—

"Yes, she is very good and kind, there is something about her which always worries me. Papa says I do not appreciate her."

"Every one else does," Joan made answer. "And uncle Albert told me he thought her quite one of a thousand."

But the girls spoke unsuspiciously. Lady Catherine earnestly hoped that her own foresight might prove to be mistaken.

The journey home did Kathleen more good than any part of her travels had yet done. Whereas Mr. Joliffe on a journey was ever in a bustle, Dr. Ritchie was a man who scarcely knew the meaning of the word "hurry." Kathleen might feel secretly impatient, but the outward repose was what she needed, and she found herself quietly condemned to short stages and frequent halts. One or two remonstrances were met by,—"It is not good for you, Kathleen,"—and then,—"You don't want to cut my holiday short, do you?"

"No," she said anxiously; "but, Dr. Ritchie, Hardwicke could take us on now. And if—if papa wants to go home——"

"He will not be at home before you. If he would, I could not allow you to make more haste."

"Could not allow" was decisive. Kathleen resisted no more.

She had some gentle sight-seeing provided for her by the way—just enough to keep her mind from feeding on itself. Freed from cares and responsibilities, and tended each hour with watchful care, she began to "look up" again, to shake off some of her languor, and to acknowledge the wisdom of the plan she was made to pursue.

Three days were spent in Paris, and two nights, inclusive of Sunday, at Rouen. Up to that date, not much of confidential conversation had taken place between Kathleen and her friends. She was very gentle, and very grateful for all their kindness, but she seemed to shrink from speaking needlessly of her troubles.

On the afternoon of this Sunday there was a change. Dr. Ritchie took Joan for a walk between the services, and Kathleen remained at the hotel with Lady Catherine. An hour's sleep was decreed for Kathleen, but somehow the plan fell through. Lady Catherine went to an easy-chair in Kathleen's room, and Kathleen sat down on a low stool, leaning against her,—as she had been wont to do of old with Mrs. Joliffe.

"Just for a minute," she said wistfully, with a kind of craving for sympathy, and Lady Catherine had not the heart to check her. She soon found that they were in for a talk "below the surface, and she thought it might do more good than the sleep.

- "I think I am very wilful naturally," Kathleen broke out suddenly, nothing seeming to lead to the remark. "I suppose this is the way I have to be cured."
 - "Which way, Leena?" asked Lady Catherine.
- "About papa," she said in a low voice. "I wanted to have him all my own. Have you not seen? I wanted to have him only mine,—nothing to anybody except me. I didn't know it at first, but the feeling grew and grew."
 - "I have seen it so," said Lady Catherine.
- "I didn't know it was wrong—then. And I could not bear the thought of anything that stood in its way. I could not bear to be less strong, and not able to do whatever papa might wish, because I thought he would care less, would depend less, I mean, upon me. I see now that it was wilfulness."
- "The first step towards victory is to know the existence of an enemy."
- "I know it now," said Kathleen. "But knowing is not victory. I am afraid I want the same still about papa, only perhaps not quite so much, and that, not only because it is right, but because things happen to change one." Lady Catherine was slightly mystified, but sought no explanation. "I am afraid I do care very much still," Kathleen went on. "But if it is God's will, I ought to be patient, and not to be always struggling for my own way."
 - "What made you think all this to-day, my dear?"

"I have been thinking it a great deal lately, ever since I was at Lucerne," said Kathleen. "One thing was a sentence that I came across in a little book. I learnt it by heart. It was—'The great cure to be wrought in us is the cure of self-will, that we may learn self-resignation; and all God's various dealings with us have this one end in view.' It seemed to me to explain so much in life; why things are often just exactly as one doesn't want them to be; and why people are contrary, and don't understand one; and why anxieties and worries come. That was partly what made me think so much about being self-willed."

"And also---?"

"Yes, something else helped. It was about Mrs. Dodson. I did feel it so much, when papa seemed to take to her as he did. I don't know why.—I mean, I did not know why at first. She is not always perfectly ladylike in her ways and her manner of speaking, but she is good and true, and she is kind and clever, and really she is more of a lady than many who are counted ladies—than Miss Jackson, for instance. I ought to have tried to like But I could not bear the feeling that papa could be happy to go out for a walk or excursion with her and Mrs. Macartney and Joan, and to leave me at home. It made me so unhappy. And then we had our adventure,—and Mrs. Dodson was so good to me, that I felt quite ashamed of not liking her better. And then this little sentence came. and I seemed to see how a test had been sent, just to show me the wilfulness and jealousy that were in me."

Was the test at an end, or was it to be applied yet more strongly? Lady Catherine wondered secretly. But she only stroked the little brown head, and said, "The last two years have been a sharp testing-time for you, in more ways than one."

"Yes," Kathleen answered. "There have been a great many troubles. I suppose all one's troubles ought to bring one nearer to God,—don't you think so?"

"That is God's purpose in sending them; but we are not always willing."

"I think I am," said Kathleen.

"Always, my dear child?"

"No, not always. O no. But still—I want it to be so."

Then, after a break,—"There is one trouble which I fancy will be less now—I mean, Joan. She is so much brighter and pleasanter. I wonder if she will go back to her old ways when we are at home again. I hope not. But I think it has been good for me. I never knew before she came how much of temper and touchiness I had. I suppose she came to teach me that."

"You remind me now of a favourite little sentence of mine," said Lady Catherine. "'Unloving words are meant to make us gentle, and delays teach patience, and care teaches faith, and press of business makes us look out for minutes to give to God, and disappointment is a special messenger to summon our thoughts to heaven."

"I like that," said Kathleen, flushing. "I like it very much. It seems to fit in so well with my other sentence. I should like to write it down some day, and to learn it."

"It is truth," said Lady Catherine.

"Yes,—oh yes, I see it. Perhaps Joan will not go on like this, but will be a little tiresome again. It might be better for me."

"Possibly," said Lady Catherine, unable to resist a smile. "But it would not be better for Joan, and I think that part of the matter should be considered. Socrates might congratulate himself on the ill temper of his wife, as a means of discipline for himself, but nobody could have congratulated Xantippe on having the ill temper. So I think we must do our best to keep Joan well and happy. No doubt if a little extra rasping is necessary for your well-being, it will come somehow. Perhaps I shall take to snubbing you."

"Oh, don't, please," Kathleen answered. "That would make me really unhappy."

CHAPTER XXV.

A LETTER FROM ROME.

Two months passed away, and Mr. Joliffe remained still in Rome. Week by week he wrote as if he were coming home immediately, but week by week there were ever fresh delays.

It was a continuation of discipline for Kathleen. She went through some hard battles in those weeks of waiting. The change came suddenly, and she sorely missed the employment of attending perpetually to her father's requirements. If the increase of leisure was better for her in one way, the longing to have him with her, and the pain of heart at his continued absence, and the struggles with discontent and jealousy, were bad for her in another way. She made no complaint, and not even her most intimate friend, Lady Catherine, ventured on a word of blame for Mr. Joliffe; but she went about with a thirstiness of expression in her blue eyes which sometimes brought tears into the eyes of her "Poor little Kathleen Joliffe," a good many called her at that time. People were very kind, in their pity, and invitations for evenings and days were numerous; but Kathleen had no heart to enjoy herself, and she found as many excuses as possible for staying at home. The Ritchies alone were sufficiently intimate to be any real comfort to her, and but for them she would have felt dull indeed.

Justinia and Olave were disposed to rejoice in their father's absence, in so far as it gave them more of their sister's companionship. But they could not fill the vacancy in her life.

Neither could Joan, even at her best. And as winter came on, Joan's bright mood waned, and she sank into much of her former condition of idleness and irritability. She had not much to interest her just then. The two people in the world whom she really cared for, Miss Jackson and Mrs. Dodson, were out of her reach, and Joan had no heart-absorption in higher interests.

The difference in character between the two girls at this stage was plain. Joan needed some one ever at hand to keep her up to the mark, to recall her to a sense of her duties, to supply a daily motive for exertion. Kathleen, in all her sadness of heart, never yielded to laziness, but struggled on day after day, doing and doing well whatever came to her hand.

Two months had passed away, when one morning, as often, there came at breakfast-time a letter for Kathleen in Mr. Joliffe's handwriting.

"From papa," Justinia said, laying it on the table.

"Do read it, Leena darling, and see when he is coming home. I do think papa ought to be home before Christmas, but Joan doesn't believe he will be."

"Little girls should never say 'ought' about their parents, Justinia," pronounced Miss Thorpe.

"And I am sure I do not know about uncle," said Joan. "How you do repeat things, Justinia! I merely said he might not come."

"You said you didn't believe he would. Do see, Leena darling."

Kathleen was pouring out tea. "Directly," she said. "I will look in a few minutes. Olave, dear, pass Miss Thorpe's cup."

"Why, Leena darling, how your hand is trembling," said Olave affectionately, leaning across the corner of the table to kiss it—a move which brought upon her a reproving "Olave!" from Miss Thorpe.

"Leena's hand often does tremble—ever since she came back from abroad," said Justinia. "O Leena, I'll tell you what I have been thinking. If papa can't come home to Christmas—I dare say he will, but if he can't—don't you think Ken would come, and take care of us all? I'm not sure, but I almost think I would rather have Ken than papa."

"Justinia, my dear!" said Miss Thorpe, in a shocked voice.

"I think I would," said Justinia resolutely. "He hasn't been once since last spring, and I want to see him dreadfully, and I know Leena does too. And when papa comes, he will only keep Leena so busy that we shall never see her."

Kathleen was opening the letter and glancing through it. That it contained something unexpected was evident. She did not lift her eyes or exclaim, but the colour in her cheeks faded away, first into streaks of pink and white, then into dead yellow paleness.

"Kathleen! My dear!" said Miss Thorpe.

Kathleen made no answer.

"My dear Kathleen!" interjected Miss Thorpe a second time.

"Leena, is papa ill?" asked Justinia eagerly.

Kathleen folded up the letter slowly, and put it into her pocket. "No," she said.

- "Not the least bit ill?" asked Olave.
- " No."
- "Then isn't he coming home, darling?"
- "I don't know."
- "Does he not speak about coming?" asked Justinia.

" No."

Kathleen was rising from her seat, and she spoke as if scarcely conscious of what she said.

"Something has certainly happened; something is wrong," said Miss Thorpe. "My dear, you cannot possibly hide it from us. Do pray tell me immediately. Your father is not ill, you say. Then what is it?"

Miss Thorpe's voice grew shrill as it was wont to do at times. Kathleen gazed at her vacantly.

"Something is wrong," said Miss Thorpe, turning from one to the other with increasing excitement. "Something serious has most assuredly happened. Has your father met with an accident? Pray, my dear Kathleen, put us out of this suspense."

- "Kathleen is faint," said Joan.
- "Is that all? Justinia, open the window—just for a moment. Where is my shawl? I don't want to take cold. Has any one seen the bottle of salts? Kathleen had better lie down, and I will send for Dr. Ritchie."
- "No—certainly not," said Kathleen, mastering herself with a strong effort. "Don't open the window, Justinia. You can all go on with your breakfast. I am only going——"
- "Where, Kathleen?" exclaimed Miss Thorpe, as she faltered.
- "To-my room," said Kathleen, with hesitation, her thoughts evidently elsewhere.
- "Are you going to lie down? I will come with you."
- "No, thank you. I am not quite well, and I want to be quiet."

Miss Thorpe's self-esteem was wounded. "My dear, you were perfectly well when you came down five minutes ago," she said in an injured tone. "It is very evident that something in your letter has caused this. I am quite convinced that you are concealing from us some news of importance. I should have thought—after all these years in your midst—I might have expected a little more confidence on your part—not to speak of what is due to your sisters—"

Kathleen was turning away, but she paused, with a look of gentle dignity. "I am not at liberty to repeat, either to you or the children, everything that my father may tell me," she said calmly. "If there is anything to say, you shall hear it at the right time. I am not free now to say more. Something in the letter has startled me a little. I must be quiet for an hour, if you please."

"And after that, Kathleen?"

"After that—I don't know——"

The bewildered look came back. She took her way, not upstairs, but to the study, entered, and, double-locked the door. Miss Thorpe, following her into the passage, saw and heard so much. Silence followed.

"Kathleen is an extraordinary girl," she said, returning to the breakfast-room. "Situated as she is, one would expect her to look for advice and help from one older than herself. But she is strangely fond of standing alone. It is hardly natural in one so young. Well—I hope nothing is wrong, but there seems little doubt about the matter. I feel really quite upset. If she did not mean to tell us more, she ought not to show her feelings quite so plainly in her face. It is inconsiderate."

"Kathleen knows best what she ought to do," said Justinia. Miss Thorpe's habit of criticising the elder sister was inducing a habit of sharp argumentativeness in the younger sister. Miss Thorpe usually permitted argument to go on till the point of irritation was reached, and then was given to checking it with a resolute hand. The check should rather have come sooner.

"Kathleen is hardly more than a child, and she

certainly makes mistakes sometimes, as one would expect, my dear Justinia."

"Well, I only know what Lady Catherine thinks of Leena," said Justinia. "She thinks there's nobody like her. And darling mamma too—I know what she thought. And she never used to let you say unkind things of Leena then, Miss Thorpe."

"You forget yourself, Justinia. There is no possible unkindness in the question. Get out your lesson-books at once. I shall go by and by, and see how Kathleen is. If she really is poorly, she ought to be attended to."

Justinia swelled indignantly under the implied doubt of the "if," but was not allowed to speak, and her lessons proved a failure that morning. Miss Thorpe presently fulfilled her intentions, but her tapping met with silence. She spoke once or twice, with the same result, and returned to the schoolroom, somewhat uneasy. Another hour passed, and Kathleen still remained hidden. Olave, sent to make observations and inquiries, reported that Kathleen had gone into the kitchen for two minutes, soon after breakfast, and had ordered the dinner, but she seemed hurried, and "did look bad," cook said. Nobody had seen anything of her since, and the studydoor was still locked.

Miss Thorpe never kept worries to herself, and each stage of her sensations was communicated to the children. She oscillated between "very thoughtless of Kathleen," and "very trying for other people," and was in doubt whether to be most anxious or

most annoyed. She came at length to the pass of declaring that she "really could stand it no longer."

"What do you mean to do?" Justinia asked, with a keen sense of the situation generally.

"I don't know, my dear," was quivering on Miss Thorpe's lips, in answer, when the door opened, and Dr. Ritchie's kind face peeped in.

"Excuse me, Miss Thorpe, but I cannot find Kathleen. I have a message for her from my wife."

Miss Thorpe sprang up with impetuosity. "Oh, I am glad you have come," she said, while Justinia darted out of the room, and Olave came close to Dr. Ritchie. "You are the very person! I am glad Kathleen will tell you, if she will you have come. tell anybody. Something very serious has happened, I am perfectly sure, though Kathleen will not inform us what it is, and this whole morning she has kept us in suspense. It is most trying—but she does not always think of other people's feelings so much as she might, poor girl-natural, no doubt, in her position, put forward as she has been, so very young and inexperienced. She does her best, I am sure—but still—at times—I do trust, however, that it is not much, but when her father's letter came. she looked so strange over it, and turned quite pale. But she would not say what was wrong, or allow one to do anything for her, and she has been alone ever since. It is really distressing for the poor I have tapped at the door, but I suppose children. she does not choose to answer."

"Where is Kathleen?" asked Dr. Ritchie.

"Why, I told you, Dr. Ritchie—locked up there the whole morning, ever since breakfast. Justinia —why, where has Justinia gone? She was here just now. Yes, Kathleen has been there ever since breakfast, and didn't eat a morsel. I don't know, I am sure, what has happened. She might be taken ill, or anything, in there all alone. She says her father is not ill; but one doesn't know really what to think. It was a long letter, and in his own handwriting, I could see that. Do pray, Dr. Ritchie, make her come out and tell us what is wrong. It is enough to upset one completely."

Olave was beginning to cry, under the influence of Miss Thorpe's excitement. Dr. Ritchie patted her hand soothingly.

"Don't be afraid, Olave," he said. "I dare say your father has put off his return a little longer, and that has distressed Leena. She misses him very much, of course; but you need not be unhappy about it. He will come in good time."

Justinia rushed back, with cheeks in a flame.

"Leena is there," she said. "Leena is there, Dr. Ritchie. Miss Thorpe has been saying that perhaps she wasn't there at all, but she is. I thought all at once of the study-window, and I ran round and peeped in."

"Out in the garden with your thin shoes, and nothing on!" exclaimed Miss Thorpe, in horror.

"Not quite prudent," said Dr. Ritchie. "Yes Justinia?"

"She is there," repeated Justinia. "And she

isn't crying or lying down, Dr. Ritchie. She is only standing before the picture—of dear mamma, you know—and looking up at it, with her hands clasped—like this. I couldn't see her face, but I could see her standing so. I called 'Leena' once or twice, but the window was shut, and she didn't hear me, and she never stirred."

"Shall we go to the study, Dr. Ritchie?" asked Miss Thorpe in a palpitating voice.

"No—thank you," said Dr. Ritchie. "Kathleen is not ill, you see. I think you had better let me go alone."

Miss Thorpe disapproved, but submitted. She stood half out of the school-room door, watched him proceed to the study, and heard him say, with a soft decisive tap—

"Kathleen, I want to speak to you. I am alone." The door opened, and he entered, shutting it behind him.

"Now, did you ever see anything like that?" asked Miss Thorpe, of herself and the children. "I really thought Kathleen must be in a fainting-fit or something. But it was simply that she did not choose. I never saw anything like it. She sadly wants a hand over her, poor girl."

"She doesn't," muttered Justinia indignantly.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHAT TO SAY?

It reminded Dr. Ritchie of the day when he had had to tell Kathleen of her mother's danger—only now he had come to hear, not to tell. She had taken a seat mechanically on his entrance, motioning him to another, forgetting to shake hands or say a word of welcome. Then she sat motionless, her hands wrung together, her breath in quick short pantings, as if some heavy weight lay upon her.

- "Miss Thorpe could not think what was the matter," said Dr. Ritchie. "She tried to get in, but you did not answer."
 - "Did she? I did not hear."
 - "You did not want her, perhaps."
- "No—but I did not hear her at the door." Kathleen lifted her eyes drearily. "I don't know how long I have been here."
 - "Since breakfast. It is nearly twelve now."
- "Only that. I thought it was nearly evening. No, I remember."
- "Kathleen, what have you heard from your father? Is it something that you may not tell me?"

There was a touch of authority in the tone.

Kathleen looked up again, this time bitterly, almost wildly. "Dr. Ritchie, I have fought so hard, and I cannot, cannot conquer!" she cried. "I don't know how to bear it. O mamma—my own dear mother!"

Did the Doctor guess? He might have done so. He only laid a quieting hand on her arm, and said, "Hush, you will make yourself ill. Is it something which you cannot tell me?"

"I must tell somebody—not Miss Thorpe and the children. I think I may tell you."

"What is it?"

She gave a quick turn in his direction, put a letter into his hand, said, "Read it, please," and buried her face in the sofa-cushion.

Dr. Ritchie read as follows:

"My darling little Leena,—I have something to say to you, which perhaps at the first moment may trouble your tender little heart, though I think it will not do so long. I am quite sure, however, my sweet one, that you will not only rejoice with and for me, but will in time learn to see that, apart from any considerations of my happiness, it is by far the best thing that could possibly happen to you all. Even if you did not, you would still be glad for me—for you are trained in unselfishness, so like your precious mother.

"I do not know, my darling, whether the possibility has ever even occurred to you, that I could or might marry again. You do not yet know much of life, and you are very young and simple, but such

an idea may have struck you as a bare possibility, and may even have struck you in connection with our dear friend, Mrs. Dodson.

"If not, the thought will at first startle you, but have patience, dear one, till you grow used to it. I confess that when first the thought came to me—which was not till after I left Milan—I too was startled, was distressed, lest it should be anything of a slight to the memory of my dearest Katie. But I have since viewed the matter differently. My love for Mary Dodson does not detract from that love—nay, it seems rather to draw me closer to her. I cannot explain how, darling, but so it is.

"I feel sincerely in this matter that I am doing the best thing which could possibly be for you all. You are young, my Kathleen, and not up to the cares of a large household, and you are not strong. And some day you will want to marry—and what should I do then?

"But these considerations alone would not have induced me to act, had I not found myself with those feelings towards her which alone can justify a man in proposing for a woman. As I tell you, I resisted for a while—tried to believe myself mistaken. But this could not continue.

"You do not know Mrs. Dodson as I do. You are a little prejudiced, my darling, and you have not quite seen the full beauty of her character. She is one of a thousand—one whom to know is to love. I must tell you the truth. My life's happiness is bound up in her. If I do not have her, I shall

never be happy again. I shall come home to Rocklands a broken-hearted man. If I have her, I shall be the happiest man living.

"I have spoken to her, my darling, and to my joy she is not unwilling. She feels for me, I believe, though in less degree, what I feel for her.

"She has one daughter, a lively pretty girl, whom you cannot fail to like.

"But Mary Dodson's consent is conditional. She believes—rightly or wrongly—that you do not like her, and she says she cannot force herself where she would be unwelcome, nor can she bear the thought of making you unhappy—for if my Leena does not love her, she loves my Leena.

"So, darling, this momentous decision rests in a manner with you. Your father's life-happiness depends upon you. I do not ask you to say you are glad. I do not press you to say what is not true. But I do beg of you, my child, to write me a few kind and cordial words, which I can show to her, of such a kind as to remove her scruples. If you do not, I may in time overcome those scruples, and I shall stay on at Rome in the hope of doing so. They remain here through the winter—unless this takes place—and so should I. But if you do what I ask—though I doubt not that just at first the idea will trouble you—still you will earn the undying gratitude of,—Your most loving father,

A. Jolliffe.

"P.S.—I shall await with intense anxiety my darling's reply."

Dr. Ritchie reached the end, and said nothing. He wanted a few minutes in which to weigh the matter, and to consider the bearings of what he might say; and he had them. But when Kathleen sat up, and said, "What do you think?" in a gentle tone, his face was not quite so well controlled as he had wished it to be. She read displeasure there.

"I doubt if your father would have wished me to read his letter, Kathleen."

"I do not think he would mind," she said. "I have thought it over, and I must ask some one, and it can be nobody here except you or Lady Catherine. I could not make it all clear to you by only telling what he says. What do you think—please?"

"Your father must decide for himself. You and I cannot judge for him."

"No—oh, I don't mean exactly in that way," she said, rather hurriedly. "He must—of course—he must judge for himself—and he does it as kindly and tenderly—as—as can be."

She broke into two short sobs. Dr. Ritchie had not often been nearer saying words which he would have had to regret afterwards. Neither by nature nor training was he given to hasty speech; but he could not trust himself at this moment, and he kept silence.

"I did not mean in that way," she repeated, more calmly again. "I meant—about my answer. Papa seems so anxious, I must not keep him waiting, but it is a very very difficult letter to write. I almost thought at first that I could not; only I must. I

was a whole hour over it, and the words seem to have lost all sense, so that I don't know whether they are right or wrong. Please, would you mind reading it, and telling me if you think it will do?"

She placed another sheet in his hand, and he read again obediently, a certain mist creeping over his eyes.

"My own darling Papa,—Your letter has just come, and I must send you a few lines directly, that you may not be kept in suspense.

"It is quite a new thought to me, dearest papa, and just at first I am startled. You do not expect me not to be surprised, and you tell me I need not say I am glad.

"But, indeed, I will try hard not to mind, and I am praying to be made to feel rightly about it. And you know, dear papa, I love you so much, that whatever makes you happy must please me. I could not bear to stand in the way of your happiness. I could not bear that Mrs. Dodson should say 'no' to you, only because of me. It would be a dreadful feeling, and I should never forgive myself. Please tell her so from me. I will try to be what I ought to her. She is so good and kind that I am sure I shall learn to love her, if she will have just a little patience with me. I never forget how good she was to me on the St. Gothard Pass.

"Please do not mind a short note to-day, dearest papa. I would say more, but I want to be in time

for the next post, and my head is aching so much that I can scarcely think what to write.—I am ever your loving child,

KATHLEEN."

- "Will it do, Dr. Ritchie?" the soft voice asked.
- "He ought to be satisfied," said Dr. Ritchie.

Kathleen took the letter back, and read a few lines, but she soon put it down, with a dazzled look.

- "I can't take in the sense of it," she said. "You are sure it will do? I want to say enough—and yet I can't pretend to feel what is not true. Do you think all that is true?"
- "Yes, I think it is. It would not be so for everybody in your place."
- "Oh, don't praise me, please," she said piteously.

 "If you knew what wicked thoughts I have had——"

She sobbed again, and he said, "Then the victory is the greater."

- "It isn't victory. I am very very unhappy. I don't love God's will. But I can't write in any other way to him."
- "No," said Dr. Ritchie. "You are wise, even taking the matter from the lower point of view. Your father has the right to choose for himself, and the responsibility of doing anything to check this would be a very heavy one for you."
- "Yes—that is it—so I thought," she said. "I should not dare—and I am so glad you think the same. It seems to help me. I was afraid of doing wrongly. And you think my letter says enough?"

"I hardly know what more you could truthfully say. You are not bound to press the matter forward, but simply to avoid being a barrier in the way."

"Then it can be posted. I want to have it safely off. I am so afraid of waiting—till—perhaps—for fear I should not be able to send it."

Dr. Ritchie repeated the words, "Not able?"

"I might feel differently. It is so hard to keep down the wrong thoughts."

"But they have to be kept down," Dr. Ritchie said.

"Yes—they have to be," she repeated. "It must be—I must conquer. But sometimes it all comes over me in one moment, like a great wave, and I don't know how to bear it, and I feel then as if I could not send the letter. I don't know which is the real feeling, that or the other. I do want him to be happy. If only it need not have been in this way! Shall I go on feeling always so?"

"No—not always, Leena. But I am afraid you have a little battling to go through."

"It is always battling," said Kathleen. "As soon as one fight is over, another begins. I am so tired of it all."

She sat drooping wearily, with downcast eyes. Dr. Ritchie possessed himself of her wrist, in his quiet way.

"I shall send Hardwicke to you with a cup of coffee," he said; "and you are to see no one else until you feel better. I will give orders to that effect. Lady Catherine will possibly call to ask how you are in the afternoon, but do as

you like about admitting her. She will understand."

- "I should like her to come in; only please tell her all first, Dr. Ritchie."
- "Yes; I understand. Poor child!" he said compassionately.

That almost undid the effect of his calming manner before. She gave him one despairing look, and hid her face in the sofa-cushion.

Dr. Ritchie waited for a few seconds, and then said gently, "Now, Kathleen!"

She stood up immediately, thrilling all over like a wounded bird, but otherwise composed.

- "You are to be a good child, keep quiet, and not think more than you can help."
- "I'll try," she murmured. "And the letter, Dr. Ritchie?"
 - "I will post it for you."
- "Thank you very very much. I am so sorry to have troubled you, and taken up your time."
- "Good-bye. Don't look forward too much," he said. "Troubles weigh heaviest beforehand, as a rule.

And Dr. Ritchie went downstairs, a good deal moved, to give his orders.

"Well," said Miss Thorpe, when he was gone, "I wash my hands of it. If things go wrong, it isn't my fault."

Things certainly did go wrong in the school-room that day, to the cost of the poor children. When Miss Thorpe was annoyed, her pupils commonly had to pay the penalty.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MRS. DODSON'S JOURNAL.

"Rome, Dec. 22.—It is all settled. My lot in life seems to be marked out—such a different lot from what I pictured to myself three months ago.

"How little I thought, when first I saw them at Lucerne, what would come of it! If we had not met thus, I suppose my friendship with the Joliffes might never have come on. Would it have been happier for me? How can I tell? My life has been a very happy one so far—not because I have not had many troubles. But I have the gift of a cheerful spirit, to begin with, and so much of love and kindness has always been poured upon me. That's something to be thankful for. The mere fact of being loved seems to bring a glow with it. Not that earth-love can ever fill the place in the heart which is meant for heavenly love—oh no, never! But I have had both; the greater and the lesser too.

"I do not now see a likelihood of unmixed brightness. I think I am looking forward a little tremblingly. And yet, if I turned from the life before me, the other life wouldn't any longer be the same that it was before. It could not be. For I know

Albert Joliffe now, and I did not know him then. That makes the difference—such a difference! How wonderful it is, the difference a few weeks can make in one's very being! Three months ago I wanted nothing more than I had. Now I feel that to part with him would just leave my life a blank.

"I thought I was past such feelings at my age. But I am not, and after all, why should I be? I am not sure but that one feels only the more intensely as one grows older.

"I don't say I could not bear the other life. I don't say I would not turn from him if I saw it to be right. But why ought I? If I can make him happy and he can make me happy, why not?

"I think the guidance must have come. I didn't seek this, or wish for it. Step by step I seem to have been led on. When he spoke, I was only just awaking to the fact that things were becoming different. Mary says she saw it long before, but I did not.

"There have been delays and hesitations enough to try his patience, but I could not help it. I could not clearly see my way to the right and wrong of the matter. No, not even after Kathleen's answer had arrived.

"It came very quickly. I would rather she had taken a longer time for thinking it over. I should have felt more sure as to her real feelings. The letter seemed to me written in a hurry, under the quick impulse to say just what she knew her father wanted her to say, with an effort to hide pain and unhappiness.

"But Albert was satisfied—how strange it seems not to have to write 'Mr. Joliffe!' He said it could not possibly be more satisfactory. And, as he says, he knows his daughter so well, that he ought to be a good judge. He tells me that it is her way to write in that short sort of style; and as for the headache she speaks of, which I fancied might have been brought on by distress, he thinks nothing of it. She has often suffered so of late, and he looks forward much to my motherly care of her.

"Will she let me give it? That is the question.

"It is some days now since that note came. I would not give a fixed answer even then, but asked for another week. Albert yielded, of course, for he could not help it, though he seemed harassed and unhappy, and very impatient at the continued delay. I do not think he is a patient man. But how few men are.

"A second letter from Kathleen, however, soon followed the first. It was not much longer, but her father said it was perfectly satisfactory; otherwise I might have had doubts. It was so curiously quiet and measured, just as if every word had been chosen with care. But of course he knows her best; and there certainly was a kind little message to me at the end. I did feel then that it would be wrong to go on hesitating and keeping him in suspense. I could not expect anything more from Kathleen.

"So now it is settled. Albert is full of joy and happiness. I ought to feel the same, and indeed I

am thankful, but sometimes a dread of the future lies on me.

"I have wished Albert very much indeed to hasten home for Christmas, if only to stay a few days. Those poor children will want him sadly, and it would be so nice for them to have him all to themselves this once more. For, of course, they will feel me something of an interloper just at first. How could it be otherwise? My hope and prayer are that the feeling may not last. I wonder if they are as sorry for me as I am for them.

"But he will not go. I can't deny a feeling of pleasure. I like him the more, because I cannot turn him. He says he will not go back until I go with him. He said, laughingly, that he was afraid, and wanted my protection. I almost thought for a moment that he really meant it, but that is absurd. I look to him to protect me.

"Still, if I am a little pleased at his unwillingness to be away from me, I should be happier if he would go.

"Dec. 31.—The last night of the old year. What a strange new year is opening upon me!

"Albert is very anxious that there should be no needless delay. He has letters to-day from home, and Kathleen speaks sadly of their lonely Christmas, and asks when he will go back. He still says resolutely, not till I go also. I have no real reasons to give for wanting to put the matter off—only a faint dread of the future, which I cannot and will not let Albert see.

"The wedding is to take place here. That is quite decided. We both want it to be as quiet as can be. If it were in England, so many friends would expect to be asked—his and mine too. And I do not think his friends and mine would suit one another. No—I feel that, in taking this step. I am saying good-bye to many many old friends. I shall love them still as dearly as ever, but I shall not see them, and they will think me changed and cold. How little people really know one another in this world!

"Viola is to pay visits for a time and to join me at Rocklands, when the first few weeks are over. I feel that this is best. She was upset and vexed at first, and now, though more reconciled to the idea, she does not seem in any hurry to see Rockston. Will Kathleen be kind to my Viola? Kind—oh yes, she will be that! But will she be sisterly?

"The 24th of January is fixed upon for the wedding-day. We shall not make much of a honeymoon afterwards, only about two or three weeks, I think, and then we mean to go home—to his home and mine.

"Rome, Jan. 23.—The eve of my second weddingday. How different from my last! Then the future looked all sunshine; but more shadows came than I expected. Now I see many shadows before me. Will there be more sunshine than I expect?

"Looking forward to this new life ahead of me, my heart sinks a little sometimes. I try to be brave and to trust in a Father's guiding hand, but now and then I find myself a very coward.

"Is it faithlessness? I have not reached this point without prayer for guidance—without waiting and watching to see where God would bring me. I cannot and do not feel that I have acted hastily or wilfully in the matter. Even when things had gone so far, that to have turned from this new life, opened out to me, would have been sore unhappiness, still I think I was willing—still I would have done so, if I had seen it to be God's will.

"But I could not see it so. Everything seemed to point just in the other direction.

"It may be that I am really wanted in Rocklands, that God has some particular work for me there. The very thought is joy to me. If that be so, I am ready for a few thorns and brambles by the way.

"Still, when I look forward, my heart does sink.

"The one trouble that I have never yet had in life, is to be unloved and unwelcomed. And the one thing which I have always thought must be hardest of all to bear, is to be surrounded by cold looks and shunning ways.

"Strange to say, the one real dread I have is of Kathleen—that sweet lovely girl. Yes, I do fear her. Will she ever let me be a friend to her?

"There are other difficulties. I don't shut my eyes to them. Better to look them in the face, and be prepared.

"There are the children. I should not have a fear

in that direction, for I can always win children's love, were it not for other influences. But there will be Hardwicke. An old confidential servant has power in a house of some sort, and she never liked me from the first. I always think she must have suspected something—before anybody else. Then there will be Miss Thorpe, chosen by the children's own mother, and I suppose quite a fixture. Will she work with me or against me?

"I shall need so much of wisdom and of guidance. And they will be given me, meted out minute by minute as I need. I don't think God gives out stores beforehand for a month or a week or even a day. That might seem comfortable, but it wouldn't keep us always in helplessness clinging to His hand.

"It is easier, somehow, to trust for any and all these difficulties than for one, and that one is—Kathleen.

"When one thinks of that sweet little delicate face, with its violet eyes and gentle smile, my fears seem almost absurd. And yet I know that they are not absurd.

"I think it is her manner that I dread, her soft quiet high-bred manner. One does not often see anything exactly like it. She has such a strange power of keeping one at a distance. I can meet and manage almost anything else, tempers, sulkiness, haughtiness, wilfulness, it doesn't matter what. But I cannot come one inch nearer to Kathleen than she chooses.

"Our positions will be different now. Not strangers

meeting on a journey, but stepmother and stepdaughter living together. How strange it seems! How will it work? Kathleen is a good girl, thoughtful and conscientious. Will she help me, and let me help her?

"I must take myself in hand, and stop this unhappy thinking about Kathleen. If I give way to it any more, I shall just be stiff and unnatural when we meet—the very last thing that I wish to be.

"I think I won't write any more in my journal until we are at Rockston. And I will try to expect the best. That is a much happier plan than expecting the worst. If trouble comes, one has at least been spared pain beforehand.

"But this is not quite the sort of entry that I ought to make in my journal to-night—the last entry of Mary Dodson before she becomes Mary Joliffe. I should not like Albert to see it, for he would be grieved.

"I do not think, however, that I could show my journal even to him. That one thing I must keep to myself still."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JOURNAL CONTINUED.

"ROCKLANDS, Feb. 22.—"I made up my mind that I would not write a single word more in my journal till I had been at least a week in my new home. It has been rather hard to keep the resolve once or twice. Journalising comes as a sort of relief to me, like talking of one's troubles to a friend.

"I had made the resolve, and I kept it. But the week is over now, and I am free to have a talk with my old friend.

"There is nobody else to whom I can tell my little troubles. I would not write them on any account to my child. And it does not do with my dear husband. I soon found that. He is easily worried, and he likes me to take everything off his hands, and to manage all for him. That is not quite easy just yet.

"It is now a week since we came home—not that I feel it home yet. I have such a strange feeling of being where I have no right to be, and of doing things which I have no right to do. I think it is the look in the children's faces which gives me this feeling.

"I always thought the moment of arrival would be the worst of all, and I longed to have it over. When the moment came, my husband seemed nervous and fluttered, and I felt calm. If one has to go through with a thing, it is always best not to give way to flurry of feeling.

"My husband had written word beforehand that the servants were to be in the hall to welcome me. I think he thought it would do me honour. As we drew near the door, he said he wished he had not given the order—anything of a family scene was so uncomfortable. But the order had been obeyed, and in the hall they were—respectful, but one and all grave as judges. Hardwicke came forward, solemnly civil. Albert said something in a hurry to them all about 'your new mistress,' and then pulled me on towards the drawing-room.

"The four girls were there, waiting. Joan came forward first to meet me, and her manner was affectionate, but I saw in a moment a change. She did not show any real pleasure at seeing me. Kathleen looked ill, and had her very quietest and gentlest manner. She gave me just one kiss, and said, 'How do you do?' and then she told the children that they were to 'kiss Mrs. Joliffe.' Justinia and Olave were exactly like two little puppets moved by wires. They kept watching Kathleen, and copying everything she did.

"I noticed that when my husband put his arms round Kathleen, and called her 'his sweet Leena,' in his affectionate way, she turned whiter still, and her lips quivered, as if she were in danger of a breakdown. But she only went to a corner near the fire, where her face was shaded, while my husband made me take a seat; and then we talked a little about weather and travelling. And I wondered if we should always have this weight upon us—like a nightmare—and whether the evening would ever come to an end.

"Albert seemed restless and fidgety, I thought. He went outside and spoke to Hardwicke, and presently he proposed to take me upstairs and show me our bed-room and his dressing-room. Everything had been beautifully prepared—nothing neglected. My husband seemed vexed at the way the furniture had been changed about, and said he liked the old arrangement better. But I guessed Kathleen's reason, and begged him to leave it so, at least for the present.

"Then we went downstairs to dinner. I said to Kathleen, 'Will you please me by keeping your own seat for a few days?' She looked up in my face with those sad blue eyes of hers, and said, 'O no, thank you, papa would not like it.' And I saw he expected me to go to the head of the table. So I sat there through course after course, with my husband opposite in a sort of nervous flutter, expecting me to make conversation and keep things smooth; and Joan on one side, silent, as she always is at mealtimes; and Kathleen on the other, as white as wax, eating nothing, and saying almost nothing—only when she did speak, always graceful and quiet.

"I don't think I can write any more about that

first evening. The very remembrance of it is full of pain. It isn't far enough off yet.

"In the morning I seemed to wake up to the fact that here I was, in my new position, with new duties, new claims, and new trials. And the position had to be filled, and the claims to be seen after, and the duties to be done, and the trials to be borne. One duty was clear. I could see my dear husband's shrinking from uncomfortablenesses, and I made up my mind to spare him in every possible way.

"After breakfast Kathleen brought me the household keys, and asked if she should show me where things were kept. I was tempted to ask her to wait a few days, but it seemed wisest not, so we went all over the house together. She was as calm and gentle as the night before, but not the least affectionate.

"I did not stay long in the school-room. Miss Thorpe's manner said plainly enough that she counted me to have no business there. And the cook in the kitchen was much the same; but that mattered less.

"We finished off by coming to the morning-room. It is a pretty little cosy place, and I know now that Kathleen always used to spend her mornings there with her mother. She flushed up and said, 'Mrs. Joliffe, I have been asking my father if this room may belong to myself. He is quite willing, if you do not object.'

"'I think it is a very nice plan,' I said; and I added, 'Anything that can make you happy will please me, Kathleen.'

"She turned her head half away, and said, 'We

very seldom have breakfast here; only once in a while, if the weather is very hot. I do not think it will be wanted.'

"'I shall never want it,' I said; and so the matter was settled. I did not quite see at the moment all that it meant; not that I could have answered differently if I had seen. But it means that Kathleen will spend all her leisure time there with her little sisters, and that I shall not be admitted.

"I do not write this bitterly or in vexation. I hope that time will do much. But it is so at present.

"March 22.—Just a month since I came to Rocklands. A month! it seems more like a year.

"I am not unhappy. O no, I could not be, with so dear and kind a husband. He depends greatly upon me for interest and companionship, and my delight is to give him all I can. He is, indeed, seldom content to have me an hour out of his sight, unless Kathleen is with him to take my place. Even that would not always content him.

"Yes, I am happy in him, and happy also, thank God, with the higher happiness which outside circumstances cannot take from me.

"But I don't say I am satisfied with things as they are, for things are not natural. I see it more and more as weeks go on.

"There are no struggles, almost no oppositions. I think Justinia would fight, but Kathleen has her little sisters completely in hand, and a look from her subdues Justinia in a moment. If I said I wished a thing done, Justinia used at first to say pertly.

'Does papa order it, Mrs. Joliffe?' Kathleen found this out, and immediately checked her. She told Justinia quietly that I was to be obeyed.

"But the life I am living here is a life apart, except so far as has to do with my dear husband. The three girls spend all spare time in their little sitting-room together, and, strange to say, Joan also is much with them, and seems to prefer that to being with me. I used to wish to see those two girls draw nearer together. Now that my wish has come to pass, do I un-wish it? Kathleen's influence somehow reaches over Joan in a way that it used not to do.

"Miss Thorpe rarely leaves her school-room, and when she does she is frigid. I cannot as yet get hold of her at all.

"Kathleen is still, as at first, gently and calmly courteous to me. Not a wish of mine is ever opposed, except my heart's wish to be allowed to win her love. She holds aloof, and her little sisters hold aloof with her, and Joan too does the same. When I was Mary Dodson, I did not think so much of poor dear Joan's affection, but I would be thankful enough for it now.

"Will this grow worse? I dread the thought, yet how to bring about a different state of things I do not know. If I speak to my husband, he says, 'Have patience, my dear, and it will all come right in time.' But will it?

"I know that I am not quite natural with the girls, any more than they are with me. There is a feeling of being tied. Sometimes it seems to me

as if Mary Joliffe were scarcely the same person that Mary Dodson was. Am I out of my element here?

"I don't think the Joliffes' friends take to me, as a rule. I suppose their recollection of Kathleen's mother comes in the way; yet I do not think many knew her intimately.

"Once or twice lately, when I have been out in an evening with Albert, he has seemed afterwards not quite pleased, and has begged me to alter some little matter in the way of manner or voice or ways. I did not know till lately how very particular he is as to ladies' appearance, and as to points of etiquette. I am making it my earnest endeavour to learn and to do exactly what he likes, in even the smallest particulars. But it is not quite easy at my age to unlearn old habits, and to learn new ones. I forget often, and then I see a worried look on his face. This sort of attention to myself keeps me from feeling at ease, and he tells me I am not so lively and amusing as I used to be. I do not mean that my dear husband exactly complains, but these little remarks drop from him.

"He often objects to my style of dress, yet he cannot tell me what is wrong, or what he would like. Kathleen has, I see, a remarkably quiet lady-like taste, and I must try to learn from watching others. I have never been used to give much thought to the matter, except just to be neat and clean. Now it becomes a duty.

"However, I do not wish to make too much of

these matters. One must expect some small pinpricks in life.

"It was a good while before I saw the Ritchies, though Kathleen is always going there. Lady Catherine and I exchanged calls, and missed one another, and then there was an invitation to dinner on an evening when we were engaged. I think I was glad.

"But we have met at last. The Doctor was polite and kind, but certainly constrained. I could see that he was pitying Kathleen all the time. He has such a good and pleasant face that I cannot help liking and trusting him. But I don't think Dr. Ritchie likes me.

"I cannot quite make out Lady Catherine. She was not constrained, and I should not think anything would ever make her so. She was not stiff or even cold, but she seemed to be quietly studying me. I should like to see her again.

"Viola is in no hurry to come. I am very very thirsty for my child, but I think she dreads her new home.

"Sometimes I wonder whether Miss Thorpe and Hardwicke are doing harm in the house. I do not think Miss Thorpe is wise in her management of the children, though at present I can say nothing. She allows no interference on my part. Hardwicke is civil, but opposes me on every possible occasion. I foresee a need for certain changes by and by, as regarding the other servants. There has been a complete liberty-reign under poor Kathleen, and

the waste that goes on is enormous. But I must wait awhile. My one aim just at present is to have no struggles. Is this cowardice?

"Oh, the need for wisdom and patience! And are they not promised?

"April 14.—Still the same. Kathleen quiet and gentle and cold; her sisters copying her; and Joan more and more taken up with Kathleen, for whom she seems to have taken a sudden and violent affection. What an odd girl she is!

"I stand still apart from them, with my own occupations and interests separate from theirs.

"In the morning my husband generally goes out with Kathleen for an hour or two, either walking or driving. I encouraged this at first, in pity for her, and it has become quite a habit. My husband is very much a man of habit.

"But we three never go out together. If I propose to go, Kathleen stays at home. I have tried it once, and only once.

"In the afternoon my husband and I are out together, and I rarely hear what Kathleen does. I think she is often so tired with her morning's walk that she has to lie down and be idle. She is looking sadly delicate, but she will not allow that she is ill.

"In the evening we are commonly all together in the drawing-room. But Kathleen and her sisters and Joan are busy apart from me. Sometimes they draw my husband into their circle, and I am still outside. "My one aim is to endure patiently, and to show no anger. That would make matters worse.

"April 15.—When writing yesterday I did not quite know how lonely I was feeling, until there came a letter from my Viola, saying that her grandmother had invited her for a long six months' visit to Normandy, and begging me to let her go. She says that she hates the thought of coming here, that she knows she shall be miserable, and that she does not think she can bear it.

"Have I parted my child from myself for ever by this step? Does 'six months' mean always? How little I knew! But that is the comfort—I did not know, and God knew, and my wish all along was to do His will.

"I shall not refuse. My mother-in-law is very fond of Viola, and the child will be happy there. I think, perhaps, she would not be quite happy here at present. She is proud, and her pride would be jarred. I must crush down my longing to see her again. No—I will not have her here even for one night—as things are now. She would not lose the first impression, and by and by all may be different. I do so pray for it—I do so watch, for fear I should give the least real cause for offence.

"I would like to go and see Viola, but my husband seems as if he could not spare me. Well—better so. I should not like it, perhaps, if he could. I told him her wish, and I think he is relieved. Certainly I don't fancy she and Kathleen would suit one another. Kathleen thinks so much

of refinement—and my Viola's high spirits are apt to be just a little hoydenish. Perhaps I ought to have checked her more.

"But I think her gaiety and fun would do me good. Anything rather than all this cold politeness. Sometimes I feel as if my heart were slowly freezing. It would freeze, but for Albert.

- "April 20.—All is settled, and Viola goes abroad. I shall not see her again, I suppose, for six months.
- "Nobody knows of my heart-ache, except my God.
- "Albert says it is a very nice arrangement. And the girls show no more interest than if she were a New Zealander.
- "But, oh, I must not feel resentment. I must not give way to it.
- "April 30.—The days go round like clockwork. I am busy, and ought to be happy. Yes, and I am happy—only there is always the weight of those four girls holding coldly aloof, refusing to give or have love. Joan has completely changed, and now positively repels me, being often very short and curt in her way of speaking, while she seems to lavish affection upon Kathleen. If Kathleen hears her speak to me unpleasantly, she represses Joan directly by look or manner. I think she counts it her duty to uphold the position of her father's wife. But if she only knew how much worse her own manner is than any mere show of temper—only I suppose she does not.

"To-day I had quite a long talk with Lady

Catherine Ritchie. She came in early, when Kathleen was out with Albert, and found me alone in the dining-room. I always spend the greater part of my mornings there, generally alone. She sat down for a chat, and I am afraid I was stiff at first. I seem to have grown into a sort of feeling lately that all Mrs. Joliffe's friends are against me.

"But I found that Lady Catherine was not. There is a wonderful sort of charm about her. She has manners as graceful and gracious as Kathleen's, but without any chill in them.

"She asked me a little about the children, and how they were, and how they spent their days. She asked me about my Viola too; and when I said she was gone to Normandy for six months, Lady Catherine said, 'Poor thing; that is hard upon you. Don't you miss her very much?' And when I tried to speak, I could not for a minute. And she said in such a kind way—'Never mind—never mind—it will be better by and by.' I said, 'It is all right, I know,'—— and she said, 'Yes, but the first few months must be rather trying.'

"That seemed to draw us together, and I found myself speaking to her more easily than I have spoken to anybody in Rockston. I was careful, knowing her to be so intimate with Kathleen; still I could not but trust her.

"We talked a good deal about Kathleen's delicate looks. She said her husband was not satisfied about her. And we spoke too about Miss Thorpe. I found that Lady Catherine does not like her much more than I do. She remarked that the children's mother had never meant to keep her very much longer, and she half advised me to make a change. I said I did not think I could. She said, 'The matter is in your hands—but of course one cannot act hastily in such a case.' I could not help thinking of the storm that would be raised. Yet it might be my duty. She is doing Justinia harm.

"I am glad to have had this talk with Lady Catherine. It has been a comfort, I think she at least looks upon me kindly."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THINGS NOT RIGHT.

"THAT poor thing!" said Lady Catherine.

"What poor thing?" asked Dr. Ritchie, who for once was enjoying a quiet evening, undisturbed by bell-ringing and summonses. May, the eldest of the small Ritchie tribe, had taken her departure, and the Doctor was intent on a book, while Lady Catherine sewed busily.

" Mrs. Joliffe."

The muscles of the Doctor's face executed an involuntary movement, the meaning of which appeared to be clear to his wife.

- "Yes, yes, I know," she said, folding a little tuck with her capable fingers. "But what am I to call her? She is Mrs. Joliffe."
 - "Of course," said Dr. Ritchie.
- "And she is Mr. Joliffe's wife, and mistress of Mr. Joliffe's house."
 - "Nobody questions the fact," said Dr. Ritchie.
- " It appears to me that a good many people ignore the fact."

The Doctor did not seem desirous to enter into a discussion on the question. He returned to his

reading, and Lady Catherine bided her time. The book was suddenly shut, and Dr. Ritchie said, "What do you mean?"

"I had a long chat with her this morning. She has been rather on my mind lately, and I thought I would satisfy myself as to the condition of affairs. Don't count it disloyalty to Leena's mother, if I say that I was particularly pleased with her."

"Disloyalty!" repeated Dr. Ritchie.

"That is at the bottom of people's feeling about the marriage. As if one could not like the second Mrs. Joliffe without ceasing to like the first!"

Dr Ritchie's eyebrows stirred.

"Yes, I was particularly pleased," repeated Lady Catherine. "I found her thoroughly unassuming; anxious, evidently, to do her duty to the full; and reluctant to say a word even verging on complaint. It is a fine face—true and honest and self-forgetting. I think she is a woman whom I could lean upon in trouble; and if I were ill, I could bear to be nursed by her. I should be sorry to be at the mercy of most of my acquaintances in illness. Whatever Mrs. Joliffe may be as to the minor points, I am sure she is thorough." Lady Catherine pronounced the adjective with emphasis, adding, "I don't mean to say that she is like Kathleen's mother."

"Nobody would dream of comparing the two," said Dr. Ritchie.

"I beg your pardon, my dear, but not an individual in all Rockston looks at Mrs. Joliffe without comparing the two—to the present Mrs. Joliffe's disparagement, of course. But why of course?"

"One could hardly help-" the Doctor began, and paused.

"I think one ought to help it. There are different kinds of excellence. Kathleen's mother was all refinement and grace, a delicate piece of finest porcelain, fit to be kept in a velvet case. This Mrs. Joliffe is good china too, but of greater strength and less high finish. One felt frightened to see the other in use, for fear it should break; but there is no such fear here."

Dr. Ritchie's face broke into one of its pleasant smiles over the illustration. He said only, "I should never have expected Joliffe to be caught by anything wanting in refinement."

"I don't think he has been. There is not high exterior finish. She has passably lady-like manners, and expresses herself easily, with really well-chosen language; still, there can be no mistake about the fact that she is not a lady by birth. There is an indescribable want of something, a want which may be felt, and cannot be defined. I concede so much. But if one finds a lack of outer finish, one finds no lack of inner refinement. To my mind that is the most important."

[&]quot;One prefers both."

[&]quot;Yes, when one can have both. But that cannot always be."

[&]quot;I don't precisely see in what respect she arouses your pity," the Doctor said.

"You did not see her to-day." Lady Catherine made a pause, with her usually busy hands still, and her eyes intent.

"Did not see what?"

"I don't like it," was Lady Catherine's indirect reply, "I do not like the state of things. Kathleen is one of the sweetest girls I ever saw; but she is not right here."

"I don't think Kathleen is to blame."

"No; you—you are a man. Of course you don't. How should you see the ins and outs of the matter? Pardon me, my dear,—but Leena's pretty face does not show her to be always in the right. I think she earnestly wishes to be."

"She is looking ill," Dr. Ritchie said gravely.

"That is it. I do not like to say anything to distress her unnecessarily,—if indeed it is unnecessary. But, in fact, it is difficult to know where to lay one's grip. Mrs. Joliffe makes no complaints. Kathleen evidently yields to her will in all matters of household arrangement, and insists on submission from the children. Yes, it all sounds blameless. But something is wrong somewhere. That poor thing stands alone in the household,—not even her own child with her."

"That is not Kathleen's doing," said Dr. Ritchie decisively.

"Mrs. Joliffe speaks of it as her own doing. She thought it best, and happier for Viola.' Why should it be happier for the girl to be away from her mother? And if you had seen Mrs. Joliffe's face

for a moment, when I spoke a kind word about missing her daughter and feeling lonely! No, she did not cry,—it was only a look."

The man servant brought in a note. "No one was waiting for an answer," he said, and went away. Dr. Ritchie passed it to his wife, after perusal, and she read the words aloud:

"DEAR DR. RITCHIE,—Would you be so good as to look in to-morrow morning to see Kathleen? She has not seemed very well lately, and to-day a heavy cold is setting in. Her father is not quite satisfied about her. Believe me, yours truly,

"MARY JOLIFFE."

"That means that Mrs. Joliffe is not satisfied," said Lady Catherine. "As if Mr. Joliffe ever noticed anybody's state of health except his own!"

Dr. Ritchie seemed to be studying the note, which she had returned to him. "It is a remarkably good hand," he said.

"It is like her face, strong and steady."

"You don't think I had better go this evening?"

"She would have asked it if she had thought it needful. No, no; do as you are told, and have a quiet hour while you can. I shall see Kathleen myself to-morrow afternoon, when I have heard your report of her," said Lady Catherine.

On the afternoon of the following day she went. Kathleen was in her little sitting-room, hoarse and languid, beside a blazing fire. Joan, on the opposite side, had an open book, and seemed to be reading aloud, but on the advent of Lady Catherine she vanished. Lady Catherine pulled off her sealskin jacket and her gloves, took a seat, and produced a half-made baby's sock.

"I can stay half an hour, but I can't afford to spend it in idleness," she said, as she often did say on such occasions.

"I ought to work, I suppose, but I don't feel much inclined," said Kathleen listlessly. "Dr. Ritchie came this morning."

"Yes. He tells me that he has forbidden you to go out for two or three days."

"Yes, he said so. I don't know that I can stay in to-morrow morning."

"Why not?"

" Papa will want me."

"My dear, your father must manage without you."

Kathleen flushed. "He never cares to go out alone."

"Cannot Mrs. Joliffe go with him?"

The flush deepened. "Oh, I don't want that, on any account. Please don't propose it."

Lady Catherine paused in her work, and looked steadily at Kathleen. "My dear!" she said, with an intonation of surprise.

Kathleen's face became crimson, and tears rushed to her eyes.

"I don't quite understand," said Lady Catherine.
"You mean that you generally walk with your father in the morning."

- "Yes, always. I haven't missed once since he came home."
- "And you think he could not be happy to go without you."
 - "Not alone!"
 - " No,-but with Mrs. Joliffe?"
- "No,—oh no, please! I don't want that," said Kathleen almost piteously. "Please, Lady Catherine. It is the only thing I have left now—and if once I break through it——"
- "You do not mean that you were out with him this morning."
- "Only just for an hour. I knew Dr. Ritchie would not come till eleven, and I was back by then."
- "This foggy morning! You were very wrong. Kathleen."
- "It was only for an hour. I always go. It is the only thing I have left."
- "Did Mrs. Joliffe approve of your going?" asked Lady Catherine.
- "I don't see that it concerned her. And Dr. Ritchie did not exactly ask. He only said that—that of course I must stay in. But I don't think I can. It is all I have left. Please don't try to take it from me."

A fit of coughing came on, and the blood flushed violently into cheek and brow. Lady Catherine brought her water from the table, and waited quietly till the paroxysm should pass.

"Does the cough give you pain in your chest?" she asked at length.

"Yes,-rather."

Kathleen rose suddenly, and came to a low seat close to her friend. Lady Catherine knew what the move meant, and when Kathleen nestled up as if for comfort, a cool hand came fondly on her forehead. But presently she said,—

"Leena, you are not to go out again until you have Dr. Ritchie's leave."

Kathleen lifted her head, and looked imploring. Not imploring only. Something of determination was there as well.

- "You understand?" said Lady Catherine.
- "Yes. Oh, I don't think I can stay in. I can't give it up."
 - "Give up what?"
 - "My mornings with papa."
- "I do not ask you to give them up permanently. It is merely a question of a few days."
 - "O no,-you don't understand."
 - "I do not understand what?"
- "About—things," said Kathleen huskily. "I always go with him now. But if I don't—she will. She did once—I remember—and I stayed in. But she never has again."
 - " Who?"
- "Mrs. Joliffe. She will, if I don't. And if he begins,——"
- "One thing is clear," said Lady Catherine. 'This is not a case of duty with you, Kathleen, but of self-pleasing."

Kathleen caught her breath. "I can't help it,"

she said. "I can't help it. I can't let him begin that. If once he does, he will not—will not—want me—any more."

Kathleen was quivering with smothered sobs. She would not yield to them, but half unconsciously she caught one of Lady Catherine's hands, and strained it against her forehead with all her force.

"Hush,—gently. What do you mean? Not want you any more!"

"He never does at any other time. He used to come to me for everything, and now—now it is only just the morning walk. And I have nothing else left. There doesn't seem anything worth living for. And if that goes too, I don't think I can bear it,—I don't think I can. It seems as if everything went, one thing after another. And if once I break through this, I know what it will be. She will walk with him, and make herself needful, and he will grow used, and—of course it is what she wants; but oh, I do think she might leave me that one only pleasure, and not take it from me. Please, please don't ask me to give it up to her."

"Kathleen, that is enough."

The words broke in, calmly and decisively. Kathleen was suddenly hushed. Lady Catherine would have withdrawn her hand, but it was held as in a vice.

"You are over excited," said Lady Catherins slowly; "and you are saying words for which you will be sorry by and by. Of course your father goes to Mrs. Joliffe in everything now, and not to you.

She is his wife. It is good of her to leave him entirely to you in the mornings, but remember, she has the first right. You are wrong to give way to these feelings."

There was a short silence, and then Kathleen murmured,—" Don't be angry with me, please. My head aches so."

"I know it does, and you are making it worse. I can stay a little longer, Kathleen, but before we talk any more you must lie down on the sofa, and keep quite still for half an hour."

- "I would rather not-" began Kathleen.
- "Either that, or I go away at once, and send Mrs. Joliffe to take care of you."
- "Oh, not Mrs. Joliffe! She never comes in here."
 - "Never?"
 - "Not into this room. It is ours."
 - "Does she never wish to come?"

Kathleen made no answer.

"That will do for just now. Lie down," said Lady Catherine quietly.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WANDERER.

THE half-hour came to an end, no sound having broken the stillness save the steady movements of Lady Catherine's needles,—and they had never the irritating click of many knitting-needles. Once Joan peeped in, and seeing her still there vanished again. At the close of the half-hour, Hardwicke appeared with two cups of tea. One was intended for Joan, but Lady Catherine had it instead. Kathleen disposed of hers slowly, and then came back to her former position.

- "Better, Leena? Have you been lying down long enough?"
- "Yes, thank you," said Kathleen, though she spoke wearily.
- "Time for me to go, I am afraid," remarked Lady Catherine.
- "I thought you were staying for a talk with me."
 - "What about?"
- "You had something to say. I think—I think you were displeased."
 - "I shall be, if you go out again without leave.

Or rather, I should be now, but that I know you will not do so."

- "I don't think a walk would hurt me."
- "You think wrongly. If you take care, you may be all right in a few days; but this is no weather for running risks."

Kathleen made no answer.

- "Does Joan spend much of her time with you here?"
 - "Yes,—a good deal. She is very kind now."
- "I see she is much more fond of you than she used to be. How about her devotion to Mrs-Joliffe?"
- "I don't think that was worth much," said Kathleen.
 - "I am sorry for it. I don't like changeableness."
- "I don't believe Joan can help changing," said Kathleen dubiously. "When she took to Mrs. Joliffe—abroad, I mean—she seemed to leave off thinking about Miss Jackson; and now she has taken a fancy to me, she does not seem to care for Mrs. Joliffe."
- "And when she takes to somebody else, she will forsake you. Uucomfortable! However, there are such characters in the world, and one must make the best of them."
- "Don't go yet," said Kathleen wistfully, as Lady Catherine put away the little sock.
- "I think I had better. If I stay, I may be tempted to give you a lecture, and that will bring back your headache."

"I should not mind a lecture from you. I have no one else to tell me when I am wrong," said Kathleen sadly. "And I feel as if I had gone wrong lately, somehow. I have not been happy."

"I have seen that for some time. We will have a little talk some day, dear. I do not think to-day is the time."

"It would do me good. Just a few words," pleaded Kathleen. "I will be good, and not cry or get excited. It seems as if I had been in a sort of tangle lately, and I cannot get out of it."

Lady Catherine looked at her watch.

"I can spare ten or fifteen minutes more. What kind of tangle, Leena?"

"I don't know," was the answer; and Lady Catherine considered.

"Do you remember a little conversation that we had at Rouen last autumn?" she asked. "And a certain little sentence about self-will, which you quoted to me. Can you remember it now?"

"I am not sure," Kathleen said. "Yes—partly. It was that 'the great cure to be worked in us is the cure of self-will,' and that 'all God's dealings with us have this one end in view.'"

"Yes; and you spoke about the different tests that had been sent to you, especially your father's going to Rome."

"I remember," said Kathleen, in a low voice.

"And I thought I had learnt the lesson then. I thought I had conquered."

"You had conquered in a skirmish, perhaps,

but not in the whole battle. It seemed to me not unlikely that a stronger test would be sent."

- "What test?"
- "That which has come since."
- " Mrs. Joliffe?"
- "Yes, your father's marrying again. That was the intensifying of the same discipline which began abroad. How about the cure of self-will?"
 - "I have not thought much about it lately."
- "Not so much, perhaps, as about trying to gain or keep your own way in certain particulars."
- "But, Lady Catherine, indeed I thought I had been submissive."
 - "To whom?"
- "To Mrs. Joliffe. I have let her do whatever she liked."
- "Let her!" Lady Catherine repeated, with a curious expression.
- "I mean, I have not resisted. I have tried to make things smooth for her."
- "The question lies deeper," said Lady Catherine gravely. "Not—have you been submissive to Mrs. Joliffe? but—have you been submissive to God?"
 - "I don't quite know," Kathleen said softly.
- "I think not. I can only judge from small matters. Suppose God willed to take from you the morning walk, for example? What then?"

Kathleen's head dropped.

- "Is that an instance of cured self-will, Leena?"
- "No, I see now. Thank you for telling me. I have been very wrong."

Presently she said,—" But about Mrs. Joliffe?"

- "Yes-about Mrs. Joliffe?"
- "I have tried to do what I ought. And indeed I do not think she has anything to complain of."
 - "Nothing at all?"
 - "Why—does she complain?"
- "No, Kathleen; not even of her long separation from her child, though the poor mother's heart is in her throat when speaking of her."
 - "But that was entirely Mrs. Joliffe's own decision."
- "Is it a reasonable or an unreasonable decision?"

 Kathleen lifted her eyes slowly. "I do not know;
 I have not thought about it."
 - "Would Miss Dodson be happy here?"
- " I don't see why not." But Kathleen looked uneasy.
 - "You think you could have met her as a sister?" Kathleen's—"Oh, how could I?" was involuntary.
- "Well, not precisely that at the first moment. But you would have given her a warm and loving welcome."
- "I would be kind, of course. And she would have her mother."
- "I see," said Lady Catherine. "It was to be a case of two households under one roof. Mrs. Joliffe and her daughter on one side; Miss Joliffe and her sisters on the other side; and Mr. Joliffe as a connecting link between."

Kathleen was silent.

"Is that a true description?" asked Lady Catherine.

"I do not see how it could be anything else," said Kathleen mournfully.

"My time is up," said Lady Catherine, rising.

"And I hardly think I need say more. You will turn the matter over in your mind, and find out whether things are exactly as they ought to be."

Kathleen's eyes were full. "I don't know how to find out," she said.

Lady Catherine kissed her affectionately. "Yes, you do. Ask to be shown, if you cannot see. Picture how your Master Himself would have acted in your position. That often helps to a knowledge of where one is wrong. I shall come again in a day or two, and meantime you are to take care of yourself, my dear child. Good-bye!"

Joan appeared presently, and asked, "Are you coming down to dinner to-night?"

"Yes, I think so," said Kathleen dreamily.

"Mrs. Joliffe asked me just now, and she said she hoped, if you did, that you wouldn't change your dress, for fear of a chill. I promised to give her message, but of course you are free to do as you like. What a long while Lady Catherine was here. How are you now?" asked Joan, with a fondling manner, oddly in contrast with her old curtness towards Kathleen.

"I am tired," Kathleen said.

"I heard Mrs. Joliffe telling papa that you ought not to go out for a few days. She said Dr. Ritchie had forbidden it, and she said he must not ask it of you. A piece of interference! He told her he had to go somewhere—I forget where—to-morrow

morning, and she said, 'Yes, I shall go with you.'"

Kathleen's heart beat fast.

"Some people do like to manage things their own way," said Joan. "Well, one comfort is, we are free here. I always thought it was such a clever move of yours, getting this room to ourselves. She daren't come in."

"I am not sure that it was right," said Kathleen, with an effort. "There is no harm in the room being ours, but she ought to be able to come in sometimes. I would rather not talk just now, Joan. I want to be quiet till dinner-time."

"And you will change your dress,—just to show that you can do as you choose?"

"No,—I shall do as she advises. Joan, don't help on wrong feelings."

Joan kissed her and went away. She often gave way to annoyance thus, having quite lost sight of her old affection for Mrs. Dodson in her new devotion for Kathleen.

At dinner Kathleen was in her usual seat, with unchanged dress and a shawl round her shoulders, for the large dining-room felt chilly after her warm little sitting-room. Mrs. Joliffe thought her looking more than usually fragile: and when dinner was over, she said in an undertone, on their way to the drawing-room,—"You would not rather go to bed at once, Kathleen?"

"No, thank you."

Two things struck Kathleen forcibly at the same

moment,—a certain suppressed tenderness and anxiety in Mrs. Joliffe's manner, and a certain extreme coldness in her own. She stopped short suddenly, conscience-smitten, and lifted her eyes to Mrs. Joliffe's with a look of almost apology. "No, thank you," she repeated gently, in a different tone, "not just yet, I think."

Mrs. Joliffe took one of Kathleen's hands between her own. "It is hot," she said. "And I can hear that the cough is no better."

"No, I suppose I made it worse by going out this morning," said Kathleen, with resolute self-humiliation. "Lady Catherine told me I was wrong."

"Hardwicke must give you something warm tonight—unless you will let me come and see to it, Kathleen. I am an experienced nurse."

The honest blue eyes, so different in colour and shape from those of Kathleen, looked as wistful and pleading as ever Kathleen's had done.

"Yes, please do," she said, on the moment's impulse. And the sudden brightness of the other's face, not a smile, but a kind of illumination of happiness and thankfulness, like the breaking-out of a sunbeam from within, amazed Kathleen. She had not expected it.

They passed from the stove-heated hall into the gas-lighted drawing-room. Kathleen went to an easy-chair near the fire, and as usual the three other girls came about her. Mr. Joliffe too sat down by her side, and petted her, and called her "his poor little girl." Mrs. Joliffe gave one look at them, and

then went quietly away with her knitting to an ottoman, at a little distance, as if to leave them in peace.

Kathleen noticed again with a sense of dissatisfaction. She pondered the matter, considering whether she ought to take any steps to bring Mrs. Joliffe into their circle. Justinia and Olave had their worsted-work, and Joan was dipping into a magazine. Mr. Joliffe proposed a game of draughts with Kathleen, while she was still debating in her mind what to do; whereupon Olave ran for the board, and Justinia went for a little round table.

The door suddenly opened, and a lad stepped inside, unannounced. He seemed to have made his way alone, as if at home. He stood there, in the full glare of the gas-light, a mere slight boy about fifteen or sixteen in appearance, dressed in a rough grey suit, with a cap in his hand. His blue eyes were wide open, searching the room, and his agitated white lips moved wordlessly.

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Joliffe, looking up.

"I've come home," the lad said huskily. "Don't be frightened. I'm not a thief, though I did get in at the study-window;" and he laughed nervously. "Does nobody know me? Where's mother?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

ONE WHO HAD BEEN!

A THUNDERBOLT crashing into their midst could not have scared them all more effectually. It was less the lad's sudden appearance than the question he asked, which so stunned those who heard.

The room presented for three seconds a motionless tableau. Justinia, having the little round table in her grasp, and Olave, bearing the draught-board, remained fixed, with parted lips. Mr. Joliffe stared in a bewildered manner. Mrs. Joliffe had risen, and turned towards the door, but at the sound of that "Where's mother?" she too paused. Kathleen sat perfectly still, ashen pale. Not one among them had ceased to think of the absent one, and to long and pray for his return; but somehow no one was expecting his return just then, and no one had realized till this moment what the home-coming must be to him.

"Is that Leena? Has she been ill? Where is mother?"

"It's Cleve—Cleve! Leena, Olave, it's our own Cleve!" shrieked Justinia.

The cry broke the spell which seemed to enchain

them. Olave's board crashed to the ground, and the two children rushed to fling their arms round the returned wanderer. Joan held back, standing behind Kathleen's chair, and Kathleen did not stir, but Mr. Joliffe rose somewhat hesitatingly, and went a few steps forward.

"Yes, I'm Cleve," the lad said, submitting to the children's hugs. Then he stood upright, putting them both aside, and repeating, while his hand was in his father's grasp, "Where is mother?"

"O Cleve, have you really really come back?" cried Olave. "We almost thought you never would! Oh, you darling Cleve!"

"How are you, my boy?" asked Mr. Joliffe, in a hesitating manner.

Cleve scanned his father's face anxiously. "I could not come before," he said. "I would have, if I could. But mother will have understood. Where is she?"

"You are very much grown," said Mr. Joliffe uneasily.

Cleve broke from him and went straight to the rug, standing in front of Kathleen. She held out her hands, and he stooped and kissed her forehead. "Where is she, Leena?" he said. "You will tell me. Where's mother? Shall I find her upstairs?"

Was he fighting against the truth, which in his heart he already knew? Some about him thought so afterwards, when they recalled the scene, and remembered the look in his face.

"Mother!" he said again; "Leena, where is she?"



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Kathleen could not speak. It was as if a bar of iron were holding her back from utterance. She panted for breath, gazing fixedly at her brother, and when he released her hands she wrung them together in wordless anguish.

"Where do you come from, Cleve?" asked his father.

"I'm come straight here—from Liverpool—straight from America. I've been there all the time. John is in prison, and Fred is dead. That is how I could get away."

"And you could not sooner?"

"No—they would not let me. Father, I must know. Where is mother?"

"No one has told you anything, then?"

A look of sharp terror came into the boy's face.

"No-nobody—I've seen nobody. I couldn't till I had seen her. I only want mother. Where is she—father—Leena?"

No one had courage to tell him the truth. Mr. Joliffe faltered, cleared his throat, hesitated anew, and finally murmured, with averted eyes,—

"This is Mrs. Joliffe."

"I don't know what you mean. I want my mother!" Cleve said fiercely. "Kathleen, why don't you speak? What has come over you all?"

Never in her life had Mary Joliffe passed through so bitter and painful an hour. She had known sorrow, but never such sorrow. The pain of the others, however intense, was scarcely equal to her pain. But mingling with distress on her own account

was exceeding pity for Cleve. The habit of mind, attained through long years, of always considering others before herself, did not lose sway even in this extreme emergency. Her first impulse was to leave the room; but she did not follow it. As they stood around with blank looks, Kathleen's gasps alone breaking the silence, except when the boy reiterated his passionate question, another impulse arose. Cleve seemed at length to perceive the truth, and he sank into a chair, burying his face in his hands. one ventured to say a word. Then Mary Joliffe herself came forward, and went to his side, and bent over him, laying upon him tender fearless hands. "Poor boy! poor boy!" she said, in a voice of melting sorrow and pity. "It is too true, Cleve. took her to Himself soon after you went away. she is better off than we are. She will never have to bear anything like this."

Mary Joliffe burst into tears, and wept as she had not wept for many a long year.

He gazed up at her. "Mother dead!" he said. "My mother dead! Then who are you?"

"I am your father's wife." She did not wince or falter as she said the words; nay, she spoke them with positive dignity. The thought of standing in the dead mother's place at such a moment was pain past expression; but the thought of being Albert Joliffe's wife brought no sense of shame; rather, she exulted in it. So she spoke steadily; but the next moment tears again fell fast, as she said, "Poor boy! this is a sad home-coming for you!"

"Mother dead! O Leena, then I killed her!" He crouched forward in a heap, with his face again hidden. Mrs. Joliffe looked round, and her eyes rested upon Kathleen. That decided her on the next step.

"Kathleen, darling," she said, using the fond word quite unconsciously; "don't you think you can come and help me to comfort Cleve? or shall I go and leave you with him?"

Kathleen did not seem even to hear. Mrs. Joliffe gave her one more look, and then put her face close to the boy's.

"Listen to me, Cleve," she breathed. "It is not so bad as you think. When you went away, your dear mother was already so ill that she could not in any case have lived long. I know what you are feeling, but for Kathleen's sake you *must* control yourself. Come with me and speak to her—at once."

He lifted his head with a look half-surprised, half-resentful, but immediately obeyed, so far as to follow Mrs. Joliffe. Kathleen still sat motionless, one hand grasping either arm of the chair, while her breathing came in laboured gasps, and her face had a strange blue whiteness upon it. Cleve spoke to her affectionately, but she turned from him, gazing at Mrs. Joliffe with appealing eyes. "I can't—breathe," she tried to say. The words were hardly articulated, and they broke into a hoarse choking cry. She started to her feet, throwing out both hands, as if for help, and fell forward in a dead faint.

Mrs. Joliffe's promptitude saved her from a dan-

gerous collision with hot bars and blazing coals. Others' movements were just too late. Mrs. Joliffe carried the slight figure, unaided, to a sofa, rang the bell, opened the nearest window, and desired Joan to take the terrified children from the room. Mr. Joliffe was unnerved and helpless, Hardwicke proved to be out, and all rested upon Mrs. Joliffe. She was thoroughly equal to the emergency, and nothing was left undone. But when the fainting-fit passed off, Kathleen proved to be so ill that an urgent messenger was despatched for Dr. Ritchie. And on Hardwicke's return from an evening spent with a friend, she found Mrs. Joliffe established as headnurse in the sick-room, Kathleen acquiescing in the arrangement.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE INTERIM.

"So they would not let you come home sooner, my boy?"

It was late that same night. Dr. Ritchie was some time gone, and the house had grown quiet after its stir. Mr. Joliffe had been for an hour or two in the study, pitying the state of his own nerves, and feeling that he was an aggrieved in-These family scenes might be unavoiddividual. able, but they were especially unpleasant to a man of his temperament, and he laboured under the impression that somebody, not himself, was to blame for their occurrence. He could not at all see why everybody-himself alone excepted-should not take things more quietly, and put a more cheerful face upon matters. He was much at a loss how to pass his time, bereft of wife and daughter at once. His presence in the sick-room was not desired, as absolute quiet was enjoined for Kathleen, and Mr. Joliffe never could be absolutely quiet. glad, abstractedly, to see Mary Joliffe occupying her rightful position, as head-nurse and household referee, but in any other sense except abstractedly

he would greatly have preferred to see the sickroom left in Hardwicke's hands, and his wife free to attend to himself.

So he sat in his study forlornly for a time, and then wandered about in aimless style, till he suddenly stumbled on the returned wanderer, alone in the drawing-room.

"Why, Cleve, my dear boy!" he said kindly. "I did not know what had become of you. Have you been sitting with your sisters?"

"Till they went to bed," Cleve answered drearily, "They say I must not go to Leena. How is she now?"

"Not very well, poor dear child! but a night's rest will do her good. You see she was a little startled—as indeed we all were. But it is a great relief to have you home again. You have had a long talk with Justinia and Olave? Of course you have a great deal to tell one another. And now I want to hear a few particulars myself." He lowered himself into a large arm-chair opposite Cleve. "So they would not let you come home sooner. How was that, my boy?"

"They never would hear of it," Cleve said dejectedly. "I wasn't free till John was in prison, and Fred was dead. Then I came."

"In prison and dead! You don't say so! Yes, now I remember, you told us so when you first came in, but, really, one could hardly take in anything then. Poor unhappy lads! They had a miserable bringing-up. But, my dear boy, do you

positively mean to say that you have never had a chance to escape from them all this time—between two and three years? Why, they must have kept you like a slave!"

"Oh, I don't know," the boy said listlessly. "They always told me they could catch me up in no time if I tried to get away, and I was afraid to make them angry. John got into such rages if he was angry. And they said that if I came home I should be taken up. They always spoke as if Mr. Corrie was dead, and it was my doing. And I used to think I had almost better stay away. I used to think it would be worse perhaps than anything for mother and Leena, if I came home, and was taken up and tried."

"Shame!" said Mr. Joliffe. "They were imposing on your fears. Mr. Corrie is quite well, and gone to Australia."

"I never knew he had recovered, till lately, father, and I couldn't stand the thought of facing everybody, if that were so. Sometimes, now and then, I felt as if I must, but other times I used to be just hopeless, and never expect to see any of you again. It wasn't till after John was taken up and sentenced, that Fred one day let slip to me about Mr. Corrie having got well. I don't know exactly how they heard, but I know they had letters and money from their home. They never would let me write to any of you. I did once, but it was hard to manage. Till John went to prison, I was almost always with one or the other, and I had no paper and no money.

Fred was never so unkind to me as John, and he used to try to make things more comfortable for me."

"How did you live, Cleve?"

The boy shook his head dubiously. "They had money," he said. "Not all from home, I am sure. They didn't tell me how they got it, and I never asked, for I did not want to know. I think they meant to train me into their ways, in time. We used to go about a good deal from one place to another, and they had a great many friends somehow: but it was the sort of friends that you wouldn't have liked for me, father, and I tried to keep clear of them; I did indeed. They used to play for money every evening, and I never would join. made John so angry with me. Fred always told him to have patience, and I shouldn't mind by and by. But somehow I only minded more and more, and I used to think it must be mother's and Leena's prayers." The boy gave a short sob as he spoke. "I suppose I got in a way used to the kind of life. Everything looked hopeless, and I didn't expect any change. Then all at once John was taken up and tried for swindling a poor old man out of his money, and they condemned him to two years' imprisonment. And Fred grew more careful, and talked of looking out for honest work, That was when he told me the truth about Mr. Corrie; and it did make a difference in my life. I made up my mind that I would get away as soon as possible, and come home. Only I had to wait, for they never let me

have a penny of my own. Sometimes I thought I would write to you, but I was afraid that if a letter came back it would only fall into Fred's hands."

"My dear boy, I should have come out to you—or sent some one," said Mr. Joliffe.

"Yes, I thought of Ken. But I think I had grown stupid, and didn't know what to do. Then Fred had a very bad accident—run over by a heavy cart. There was no hope from the first, and he seemed wretched and sorry for all he had done. He told me I had better come straight home, when he was gone, and he said I should find money enough in his pocket, and so I did. I didn't like using it, for there was no knowing how he had come by it; but I knew you would repay it to anybody, if one could find out,"

"Of course, of course," said Mr. Joliffe. "And then, my boy?"

"Fred didn't die for some days, but it was sudden at last. He used to make me say a text to him now and then, for I had not any Bible. I wished so that I had. But he was very very miserable up to the last, and nothing that I could say comforted him. He would not let me call a clergyman. I told him mother would tell him to pray, but he did not seem able. It was a horrid time, father. And then, when he was dead, I came off as quick as I could, and sailed in the first ship, just as I was, I could not bear to lose an hour. I did so hope I should find—but I was always afraid—"

Mr. Joliffe must have understood, but he did not

pursue that branch of the subject. He only went on asking questions about the life in America, and condoling with Cleve on all he had gone through. It seemed a relief to the lad to talk, and in the act of so doing he was evidently creeping back into the old home feelings. A long chat with his younger sisters had already done much for him. The knowledge of his mother's death pressed heavily, but at present he strove to put it aside.

He was greatly altered from the simple and easilyswayed boy of two or three years back. seen much of the world, much of evil, much of trouble; and these had left their combined mark upon him. At fourteen he had been a mere child; at sixteen he was developing fast into manhood. He seemed to have left behind him the old weakness of character, which had caused him to bend before every influence brought in turn to bear upon him. Kenison had once expressed a hope to Kathleen, that the very events, which seemed to sever him hopelessly from all good influences, might be the means employed to guard him from evil; and thus, indeed, it seemed to have come to pass. In his distress and horror at the deed which he believed himself to have committed, he had been driven to take a stand for the right, which he might never otherwise have taken; and in the despairing sense of his own weakness, he had been driven to prayer for help; while the very lack of a Bible within reach had made him cling the more to recollections of Bible lessons in the past, once little valued. If any fear remained of a later relapse into the old weaknesses, a fresh antidote had come, in the shape of the grievous knowledge that his flight had hastened his mother's death.

He knew so much, as he sat talking with his father. The children and Joan and Miss Thorpe had given him many detached particulars, expanding Mrs. Joliffe's brief assertion in the drawing-room. He knew that he had not indeed killed his mother, though his conduct had hastened the death, before inevitable.

Mr. Joliffe kept studiously clear of the subject, and Kathleen was in no state for conversation, and Joan and Miss Thorpe were not gifted in the art of consolation. So, strange to say, it fell to Mrs. Joliffe to be his comforter. She managed to leave the sick-room for half an hour, not far from midnight, and found Cleve alone in the study, sobbing like a child beneath his mother's picture.

It would have been an embarrassing situation for some women, but again Mrs. Joliffe was able to put thoughts of self aside. She took the boyish head upon her knee, and sat talking freely to him of the mother that was gone, and of that mother's deep love for her boy. She described Katie Joliffe's dying trust that Cleve would be kept from evil, and restored again to his home; for all this she had heard from her husband.

"Kathleen will be able to tell you more," she said. "But I know her end was peace, with no shadow of a fear for you. And her last message was that you must meet her in heaven."

"Oh, I will—I will!" sobbed Cleve, "God helping me."

"As He will," Mrs. Joliffe said. Then, in a little while, when his grief was quieter, she spoke in a different tone: "I want very much that you should understand one thing, Cleve. I know it must be great pain to come home and find me here. isn't to be expected that you should not feel it, and you won't get used to it yet awhile. want you to remember that I haven't the very least thought of being in the place of your dear mother to you. Such a thing could not be, and I know it right well. You can never love anybody as you loved her, and I should not like to think that you could. And you must never fancy that I mind hearing you speak about her, for I don't. I often talk of her to your father, and I would like to do the same with you and Kathleen. But though I can't be what she was, I do want just to be a friend to you all. Will you let me, Cleve? Do you think you can trust me, and learn to love me?"

"I'm sure, if she was to know, she would want us to be good to you," the boy answered frankly, with a truer instinct in the matter than Kathleen's had been.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MOTHERLY CARE.

CLEVE came home on a Friday. On the Sunday morning following, in the course of the service, many present were electrified by the words, in Dr. Baring's impressive tones:

"The prayers of the congregation are earnestly desired for Kathleen Joliffe, who is dangerously ill."

"I should like to be prayed for in Church," she had said that morning to Mrs. Joliffe. "I know I am in danger, for I see it in Dr. Ritchie's face; and I think I am ready either way, but still I want the prayers. Ask them, please, 'for Kathleen Joliffe.' I don't like prayers being only asked for somebody, nobody knows who."

So the prayers were requested, and many a head bowed low, and many a heart sent up an earnest appeal, which would scarcely have been so earnest had its object been merely "a member of the congregation." Few did not know of Kathleen's sudden illness, for the news of Cleve's return had spread fast; but few, as yet, were aware of her danger.

The prayers were answered, only not at once. Kathleen grew worse before she began to show signs of improvement. Long weeks of pain and weakness were appointed her, and for many days she hovered on the very borders of the grave.

It was an illness of desperate nature, resulting in part from long strain and distress of mind and brought to a climax by severe chill and by the shock of Cleve's unexpected appearance. A complication of ills seemed to fasten upon her with an iron grip. She was brought so low that at one time each moment was expected to be her last. Even the experienced Hardwicke twice thought she was actually gone, and Dr. Ritchie all but gave up hope.

Yet Mrs. Joliffe never despaired. Day and night she was in almost ceaseless attendance. She seemed not to know what it was to be weary. For six consecutive nights and days she would not take off her clothes, except for her morning and evening bath; and her only rest was an hour at a time upon the sofa in an adjoining room. Dr. Ritchie expostulated in vain.

"I must win her through, if it is God's will," she said. "At least she shall not want the care that a mother could give."

But not many mothers, however willing, could have given such care as this. It was "magnificent nursing," Dr. Ritchie said to his wife. Nothing was forgotten, nothing neglected, nothing hurried. Day by day, and hour by hour, each symptom was watched, each precaution was taken, each command was obeyed. When it came to the worst, Kathleen lay for two nights and days, just alive, just breathing, and no more. She was not conscious, and those

around believed that each breath she drew would be her last. Then, in her utter self-devotion, Mary Joliffe stood and sat beside the bed through thirty hours of unbroken watch, never yielding her place even to Hardwicke, that every ten minutes she might administer the spoonful of liquid, on the incessant giving of which Dr. Ritchie grounded his only remaining hopes.

Nor were the hopes vain. From that time Kathleen began steadily to amend. Still the same unwearied and devoted care went on, no fatigue seeming too great, no watchfulness too intense. And already Mrs. Joliffe was having a reward; for Kathleen, with the capriciousness of illness, clung strangely to her stepmother, would take food from no other person's hand, and could scarcely endure her to remain a moment out of sight.

"She will do now," Dr. Ritchie said one day.

"There is nothing more to be wished than that she should go on as she has done the last few days.

Thanks, under God, to your nursing, Mrs. Joliffe,"

She looked up with a stirred and tremulous smile.

"Then I have not come here for nothing," she said. "I thought—I thought—it might be so."

Dr. Ritchie was not an impulsive man, yet words for once broke from him impulsively: "If it had not been for you, Leena would have died," he said. "No ordinary care could have brought her through. I have done my share, but without such help as yours to second me, my efforts must have failed."

"Thank you,-oh, thank you!" and tears streamed.

"Forgive me, Dr. Ritchie,—but if you knew what your words are to me—I am very foolish——"

"No, you are overstrained," he said kindly. "You cannot go on like this, Mrs. Joliffe, or I shall have you for a patient too. What you have done already is simply marvellous."

"Oh, it has been joy to do it—to do anything for that dear child. I know my own powers, and I shall not break down. But oh, I am thankful."

And when Dr. Ritchie told his wife of the little interview, she said smilingly, "I will not triumph. But was not my estimate the right one?"

Kenison Montgomerie had been summoned home by telegram, in an early stage of the illness, and he remained till Kathleen was fairly convalescent. was able to make himself useful in many ways; especially in giving companionship to Mr. Joliffe, and in comforting Cleve, who bitterly reproached himself with being in some degree the cause of his sister's illness. Moreover, having the standing of a son in the house, he was able to set right certain little matters with respect to Mrs. Joliffe's position. which had not yet been as they ought to have been. In those weeks of trouble he learnt thoroughly to estimate her fine qualities and high tone of mind: and he also saw and sympathised with her past difficulties. He even went so far one day as gently but firmly to point out to Miss Thorpe, in confidential conversation, the evil of household divisions, and the danger of encouraging in Justinia a spirit of opposition. Miss Thorpe was greatly flurried, defended herself warmly, then relapsed into tears, and confessed that she certainly had not been quite right. Next day the offended air gained supremacy, and she told Kenison she believed she had better decide to leave Rocklands—it might be happier for the children. Kenison did not combat the assertion as she perhaps expected, but referred her to Mrs. Joliffe, and Mrs. Joliffe acquiesced. "I am sorry for it, Miss Thorpe," she said, "but I have felt for some time past that it would have to be so before long." After this, whatever Miss Thorpe felt, the thing was settled.

"Mr. Montgomerie," Mrs. Joliffe said one evening, when they were for a few minutes alone together, "do you ever write to your friend, Mr. Corrie?"

"Periodically," said Kenison. "About once in six months we exchange information. I have a letter in hand now, but I could not resolve to send it till I should be able to speak of Kathleen as 'really getting on.'"

"You think the news of her illness would distress him?"

Mrs. Joliffe spoke inquiringly, and Kenison simply answered, "Yes."

"He was her brother's tutor, and their friend," said Mrs. Joliffe musingly. "Would it be that only, or anything beyond? I am not meddling in what doesn't concern me, without a reason."

"No one could suspect you of doing so," said Kenison. "But I hardly know how far I am free to answer you. I am bound by no promises,—still, if I knew less, I could say more, perhaps."

"If you had used your eyes only, instead of being treated to a friend's confidence," she suggested quickly. "But sometimes one may use a friend's confidence for his good. I think you may trust me, so far as you are free. I know that I may trust you. Will you tell me if it is true that Mr. Corrie is engaged?"

- "Corrie! Not he!"
- "There was a report of such a thing in Rockston."
 - "How long ago?"
- "I heard something of it a good many months ago,—last autumn."
- "Then it is untrue. He was not engaged four months ago. This I can vouch for."
- "Mr. Montgomerie, I don't know whether you ever heard," said Mrs. Joliffe—"but he had at one time a fancy for Kathleen."
- "Poor Corrie, yes. A good deal more than a fancy."
- "My husband has told me something of it. Kathleen says nothing."
- "She would not have him," said Kenison. "You know that too, of course; so no harm in my mentioning it to you."
- "You don't think the fancy has died out by this time?"
- "No. It was no mere fancy," said Kenison.
 "Corrie was as deeply in love with Kathleen as

a man well can be. I think many suspected the fact, and I know it. I believe that he is the same now."

"Why does he not come home and try again?"

"What should bring him? Kathleen gave him no grain of hope that the thing could ever become possible?"

"She was very young," said Mrs. Joliffe, "and girls don't always know their own minds,—and people change sometimes. Besides, Kathleen did not see him herself—and messages sent through a third person are apt to be given perhaps a little more strongly than is quite meant. But that's a small part of the matter. I don't think Kathleen would have had him then on any account. She would not have felt that she could leave her father. I don't for a moment say she would have him now; still, I do see that things are different. She is free now, in a way she could not be when her father was never happy for an hour without her. All I wonder is that Mr. Corrie doesn't just try once more."

Kenison sprang to his feet, and then sat down again. "I see! I see!" he said. "It never struck me before. Then you think that may have been her reason?"

"I am free to think, and so are you," said Mrs. Joliffe. "Mind, she has not said one single word to me or to anybody. But if Mr. Corrie is of the same mind still—well, if I were you, I would just advise him not to be too sure that there isn't a little hope for him—some day."

"Thank you, thank you a thousand times," said Kenison earnestly. "Your confidence is safe with me, and I will take care what I say to Corrie. But I think a hint will be enough. If you had seen his last letter to me—poor fellow!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DESIRE GRANTED.

SUMMER had passed away, and autumn was far advanced, and yellow leaves, with curled edges, dropping from the trees, lay thickly about upon the ground. The wind came in gusts to play pretty frolics, catching up the scattered foliage, whirling it aloft, and sweeping it into drifts, through which the children loved to wade.

Kathleen found the wind something of a trouble and the leaves too, as she made her way through a quiet avenue, not far from Rocklands. She was counted fairly well again, but strength came back slowly, and this was one of her first walks to any distance. Reaching the middle of the avenue, she paused to rally her forces, and remained leaning against the trunk of a tree, sinking into a dream.

The dream resolved itself into some verses which Mrs. Joliffe had often repeated to her during her tardy convalescence. She had found them a comfort now and then. And as she stood waiting for power to go on, with a nameless depression weighing upon her, these words came ringing softly through her mind, as if spoken by a human voice:

"Wait on the Lord for what He hath to give,
O restless heart;
He knows the sorrows that beset thy way,
He knows thy fretful weariness to-day,
O fainting heart.

"When thou hast stilled thyself to rest in Him,
O throbbing heart,
When thou hast learned to love Him first and chief,
To love Him even better for thy grief,
O weeping heart;

"Then will He grant thee all thine own desire,
O longing heart,
Sunlight of joy may even here be given,
If so He will—if not, sunrise in heaven,
O waiting heart."

"I think I am learning," Kathleen murmured.
"Yes, I think He is teaching me; and the comfort is, that He does know all. I don't think I would alter His will for me; no, not in anything. It has all been right, though I could not believe it to be so, before my illness. I see it now."

She stood there still, resting, and not definitely thinking, but only feeling as if she had scarcely energy for the walk home.

All at once there came a strong quick step over the fallen leaves, whisking them aside. Kathleen looked up, and her heart gave one strong throb, for Marshall Corrie stood before her.

Kathleen's hand was outstretched silently, and he grasped it, examining her face with anxious eyes.

"You have been ill indeed," he said, "Kath—Miss Joliffe."

- "Yes, but I am better now," she said gently.
 "You look strong, Mr. Corrie."
- "Australia has done wonders for me. But it is not home. It never could be. I have been longing to see England again. And when I heard of your illness, and of Cleve's return——"
 - "Ken wrote you word, I suppose."
- "Yes, and I came off at once, almost,—as soon as possible, I mean,—leaving matters uncertain about my return, till I should know,"—— Mr. Corrie spoke hurriedly and almost incoherently. The encounter had taken him by surprise, and thrown him off his balance.
- "Cleve will be so glad to see you, poor boy," said Kathleen.
- "As I shall be to see him. Kenison has told me about him—how much we have—how much there is to be thankful for."
- "Ken always hoped good might come out of the evil"
- "And has it not been so? But ought you to stand here, Kath—Miss Joliffe, I mean? Forgive me," said Mr. Corrie, in some agitation. "You are always in my mind with that name, and somehow, seeing you so suddenly——"
- "I was only waiting for a minute's rest," said Kathleen. Her voice was quiet as his was tremulous.
- "Then you will rest a few minutes longer, will you not? I should be so glad. I do not feel as if I could bear to wait, without putting one question. I do not ask for much in answer, only just to know

that all is not quite hopeless. Kenison has told me of the changes—your father marrying again. Kathleen, does it—does it make any difference? All the way home I have been indulging in the hope that perhaps—perhaps—this might alter things. I don't ask much. Only, is there any hope that some day—by and by—Kathleen, may I stay in Rockston and try—or must I go at once?"

Kathleen's deep blue eyes were lifted to his for one instant, and then dropped again.

"Is it true? Am I mistaken?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"I could not leave papa then, Mr. Corrie," said Kathleen, in a low tone.

And the wind no longer blew mournfully, and the dead leaves no longer spoke in a minor key, and Kathleen's weariness of body and spirit was gone, as she paced up and down beneath the trees with a strong arm for her support. Life seemed all at once so bright, that she could scarcely believe grief would ever touch her again. She made no enquiries about the reported engagement. No mention of it had ever passed her lips, since the receipt of Minnie Baring's letter, and now she simply forgot it. Neither of the two was in the least aware how the next half-hour fled.

"Doesn't it seem wonderful," Kathleen said, when they turned homewards, Marshall Corrie remembering that his companion's strength might not be overtaxed,—"isn't it wonderful that just the very thing, which seemed such a terrible trouble to me, has been the thing which smoothes our way now?"

- "Which, my darling?" he asked.
- "Papa's marrying again. If he had not married, I could never have left him."
- "I shall be grateful all my life to Mrs. Joliffe," Marshall said joyously.
- "Oh, not only for that. If you knew all that I owe to her! I don't suppose I should ever have lived through this illness, but for the care she gave me. And when I think how badly I treated her before—"

Mr. Corrie of course exclaimed incredulously.

- "Yes, I mean it," she said, with an earnest manner.

 "And it is right that you should know the truth.

 I was not kind to her for a long long while; but I do love her now dearly."
- "I shall owe more to her than you can ever owe," said Mr. Corrie; and he added seriously,—"It is well that we cannot shape our own paths. God's choosing is the best."
- "I see it now," Kathleen answered softly. "But I wish I had trusted Him all the while."

Suddenly there was an astonished shout, and Cleve dashed across the road. The hands of former tutor and pupil met in a tight clench.

- "Why—I didn't know——" gasped Cleve.
- " Nobody knew he was coming," said Kathleen.
- "He's done you good, anyhow," said Cleve, with a glance at her bright cheeks. Then, his manner changing painfully: "Mr. Corrie—I say—I can't tell you how awfully sorry I was!"

- "I know all about it, my dear boy," said Mr. Corrie affectionately. "You and I shall only be closer friends than ever now."
 - "You're not going back to Australia again?"
- "No," said Mr. Corrie, looking down at the little figure resting on his arm. "I came home, feeling doubtful, but Kathleen has settled the question for me. I must look out for work in England now."
- "Leena!" said the boy, and he glanced from one to the other, comprehension dawning. "Oh, I say, that's first-rate."
- "And you will have me for a brother?" asked Marshall Corrie, smiling.

Reaching home, the news became speedily known, and unhesitating gladness was expressed. Mr. Joliffe declared that Marshall Corrie was the only man living to whom he could have been content to give his sweet Leena; and his wife heartily rejoiced in Kathleen's happiness. Dr. Ritchie and Lady Catherine were the first outside Rocklands to hear the tidings, and the first to call and congratulate.

One only did not rejoice in Kathleen's prospects, and that one was Joan. The chief thought with Joan was ever of her own comfort, and very pitiful she grew over the idea of losing Kathleen.

- "Plenty of time yet," Mrs. Joliffe said cheerily, when Joan bemoaned herself. "Three months yet before the wedding."
- "Oh, they will be gone directly. Months always go fast, when one wants them to be slow. And if Marshall takes the curacy in Cumberland——"

"He will not do so. Dr. Ritchie fears the cold for Kathleen. I happen to know that another good opening has been heard of this morning—a living, and not a curacy, between Rockston and London. So you need not fear Cumberland any more."

"It will be almost as bad. It is losing Kathleen either way."

"If Kathleen's mother were living, she would think of her child and not of herself. You and I must do the same."

"But you have other people," said Joan. "You have uncle; and Viola will be here; and everybody likes you. I don't care for any one except Kathleen."

"That is pleasant hearing for all of us," said Mrs. Joliffe, smiling. "Shall we invite Miss Jackson for a month, when Kathleen goes?"

"Oh, I don't care," said Joan.

"Shall I tell you what it is that is really wrong with you, Joan?" asked Mrs. Joliffe. "You are trying to satisfy your heart-thirst with anything and everything short of Christ, and you won't be able."

"I am always happy with Leena, aunt Mary. That is all I want—just to have some one that I love with me."

"It's a want that means a deeper thirst—a heart-longing that can never be met till you go to God Himself for what you need. My dear, you can't be always with Leena, or always with anybody human. It is Jesus Himself that you want for a Friend. No other can be like Him—always the same, and always

at hand. I wish you would try, Joan, just try, what a difference it makes in life."

Joan made little response. Perhaps she thought the matter over, and the words in time may have borne fruit.

When Kathleen went to live in another home, Joan was very listless and unhappy for a while. Then she comforted herself with Viola Dodson.

No harm in this, if the Heavenly Friend had stood first in her heart. No evil in earthly love, if the Heavenly love reigns supreme. But Joan was long in learning the lesson that Water of Life alone can satisfy the living human soul.

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